

## PLAY+SOFT: an Italian design project

1. [www.playpiu.com](http://www.playpiu.com) (manufacturing/project leaders). **PLAY+** is the name of the research project and the name of the company set up to manufacture the products in Italy. [www.feelgood-designs.com](http://www.feelgood-designs.com) (point of contact/distribution) **feelgood designs** is a company set up to distribute the products and point of contact for design projects.

2. Background about **Reggio Children** is at their website, e.g.

- <http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/nidiescuole.htm> brief introduction to the schools and school environments.
- <http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/reggiochildren.htm> brief introduction to Reggio Children's role representing and coordinating research and representing the schools.

3. 'PLAY+SOFT is a line of soft furnishings for children, consisting of 250 new products, developed from an idea by **Maurizio Fontanili**, with the pedagogical consultancy of **Reggio Children**, a team of twenty-eight innovative international designers, and the art direction of ZPZ Partners. The products are the result of a four-year research project and are manufactured in Italy by **PLAY+**

The project developed out of this initial idea by Maurizio (the project leader), and built on the research by Reggio Children on environments for children recounted in the seminal text *Children, Spaces, Relations* (1998), a book that is widely available and frequently referenced worldwide with regard to the development of creative learning spaces for children.

The editors for this book were Michele Zini and Giulio Ceppi. Michele Zini is part of **ZPZ Partners** - <http://www.zpzpartners.it> - art directors for the PLAY+ project and designers for a number of pieces in the line. ZPZ are also architects responsible for a number of innovative projects, notably environments for children that have evolved out of research with Reggio Children. ZPZ also work extensively with Stefano Maffei at Milan Polytechnic, which has a dedicated 'Design for Children' department.

4. The PLAY+SOFT line is a meeting between pedagogy and design.

The starting point for the design project is a philosophy towards children and an approach to education at Reggio Emilia. It is this starting point that distinguishes PLAY+SOFT: not only the quality of the design team, but also the project's foundation in credible (and world leading) pedagogical and child developmental research.

The short articles by Carla Rinaldi and Vea Vecchi (of Reggio Children) in the catalogue serve as a useful introduction to this philosophy. For example, Vea's article is a passionate statement insisting that aesthetics are a vital and important element in the quality of human life, promoting the belief that children have a 'right to beauty'.

5. The furnishings aim to introduce new sensory and aesthetic qualities into environments for children in education, domestic settings and public spaces (including retail settings, museums, libraries, hospitals, airports, etc.), supporting the development of flexible, multisensory and creative spaces, open to many interpretations. PLAY+ developed and patented a new synthetic material (ecosoftx®) to create these tactile qualities: soft to the touch, easy to clean, water-repellent, fireproof to BS 5852:1990, European standard EN 1021-1 and EN 1021-2 (CSI – 11.10.07 – DC01/782F07); Elast 65 foam density 50kg class 1 im, BS 5852: part 2, crib 5

The materials are unique for this kind of furniture: **no PVC** and **no rubber latex**.

6. The product line has been featured as part of 'New Italian Design' at the Triennale in Milan <http://triennale.waylog.it>. From April 28th to October 28<sup>th</sup> 2007, PLAY+SOFT was exhibited with the V&A in London [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk) at their Museum of Childhood site [http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/whats\\_on/exhibitions/index.html](http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/whats_on/exhibitions/index.html). In September 2007, the line was displayed at the Southbank Centre, for the London Design Festival (15-25 September), and the story of the design project was a keynote presentation at 'design for children', opening conference for the festival (specifically: pedagogical and child developmental research as a starting-point for design projects, including product development, architecture, etc.) This event featured contributions by Reggio Children, ZPZ Partners (including Michele Zini), Domus Academy and Politecnico di Milano – 17 September, Purcell Room, Southbank Centre. The Ecosoftx® fabric was featured at Greengaged, a sustainable design event with ReDesign and Design Council (UK), for London Design Festival, 2008.

Features about the development of the line have appeared in publications including I.D.magazine (US), Design Week, Abitare, Interna, FT Weekend and ID-FX, as well as many specialist architecture and design magazines worldwide.

For further information, please contact [info@feelgood-designs.com](mailto:info@feelgood-designs.com)