

## **Barbies of the World. 20th century**

Mixed media

Collection of Scott Appelwick L2012.160.1-7

Mattel, Inc.

American, est. 1945

Represented in the case:

Dolls of the World Collection: Chile, Ghana, Holland, India, Hawaii, Princess of Japan, Princess of the Navajo

---

### **QUESTIONS:**

**DESCRIPTIVE:** How are these similar? How are they different? Note their accessories and costume. Note how they are labeled. (But these questions do not really address their presence in this exhibition...)

**INTERPRETIVE:** Why do you suppose they presented here in this Global Fusion gallery? Do you think they belong here in the museum at all?

***Perhaps it is the art of marketing a fantasy in an age of global consumerism.***

---

The following excerpt, I think, explains it best. (Let me know if you really want the whole 18 page PDF...)

Excerpts from "JAPAN, THE U.S. AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF CHILDREN'S CONSUMER CULTURE"  
By Gary Cross and Gregory Smits Pennsylvania State University

Mattel Toys recently discovered that it no longer had to produce Barbie dolls with Asian features and clothes. With the opening of Eastern Europe in the 1990s to aggressive marketing and the growing identity of the commercially savvy young in many third world countries, Mattel was able to sell Barbies in about 140 countries by 1997, but did so by assuming the dress and physical look of forty nationalities. *However, in 2002, market testing led an official from Mattel to proclaim: "Blond Barbie sells just as well in Asia as in the U.S." No longer, did the \$55 billion global industry in children's playthings have to manufacture different toys for children in different countries.* This, of course, is a boon for companies who now seem to be able to orchestrate global merchandising of identical games, dolls, and toys. And so "Mattel's Rapunzel Barbie, whose ankle-length blonde locks cascade down her pink ball gown" was released late in 2001 in 59 countries including the U.S.—"the company's biggest product launch ever," reported the Wall Street Journal, with TV ads broadcast in 35 languages and quickly selling \$200 million of the dolls, almost half outside the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

The phenomenon of dark-haired girls in East Asia selecting blond-haired Barbie dolls might suggest the remarkable marketing power wielded by Mattel. ... For one thing, the flow of toys across the Pacific Ocean is not unidirectional. Toys produced in Japan, for example, have become popular in the United States (and world-wide) with no modification. The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers are one example. ...

Underlying this story is a more subtle trend—the linkage of modern children's consumer culture with the globalization of the design and manufacture of innovative products. It is not merely that the American makers of Barbie have swept away traditional dolls and local culture, but the plaything industry across the world has become integrated, with design centered in the U.S. and Japan and production based in China. This particular configuration may be of recent origin, but dolls and toys have long been objects of international trade. Playthings have long roots in local folk cultures and crafts, and regional and national traditions of toy and doll making have long reinforced ethnic and local identities in children. But the construction of modern childhood over the past century especially has paralleled the decline of these craft traditions and the emergence of a global children's commercial culture. ...

... Only in 1955, when Mattel bought ad time on Disney's new daily TV program for children, the Mickey Mouse Club, did Mattel become a major innovator. Advertising daily (not waiting for the Christmas season) and appealing directly to children revolutionized toy marketing. The resulting explosive sales of cap guns made regular TV advertising a must and catapulted Mattel into a leading toymaker. Ruth Handler's launch of the Barbie fashion doll in 1959 not only broke from the traditional baby and companion doll, but was widely advertised on children's TV. Thanks to TV ads, Mattel's sales rose from six million in 1955 to 25 million in 1960.<sup>16</sup> ...

### **Implications of a Globalized Children's Consumer Culture**

These developments are not merely economic in nature, but are part of wider social and cultural transformation in children's experience of play and closer relationship to consumer goods. The global children's commercial culture culminated only in the late 1970s with the emergence of elaborate lines of action figure toys, Barbie, and video games. But it originated around the turn of the twentieth century in the US, creating a consumer culture built on rapidly changing commercial fads and product integration around fantasy narratives that separated children's from adults' culture. These innovations would eventually displace slow-changing regional children's culture in large parts of the world. ... There was little TV advertising to children in Europe at the time when Americans were developing it in the 1950s and 1960s and some countries even banned it in response to the Americanization of children's culture. By the 1960s, the British toys appealed to the nostalgia of adults or addressed the concerns of parents to educate and separate their children from the popular culture. British Meccano construction sets and Lesney "Matchbox" cars shared Swedish Brio's simple wooden toys and Playmobil's sturdy play sets the status as niche products sold to affluent parents in the global market who rejected the commercial fantasy culture. ...

By the 1980s, commercialized children's culture in the U.S., Europe, and on the prosperous Pacific Rim had become the norm. Toys were increasingly designed and marketed through American and Japanese companies and manufactured in South China adjacent to the international commercial center of Hong Kong. The growth of satellite TV and privatization of the mass media has breached the walls that separated European, Asian, and other regions from the power of globalization. The American and Japanese conquest of European and Asian toy markets meant the reduction of regional styles of playthings and a shift away from toys that imitated adult worlds of work and life. ... The playthings that children desire and parents give have become part of a global system of communication and distribution. The result is that Asian girls want blond Barbies and American boys want Japanese Power Rangers.

---

### **MORE QUESTIONS:**

#### **INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS:**

Compare to Murakami's Panda: the power of marketing, and development of a comprehensive "back story" to the fantasy figure.

What is the fantasy that Mattel is selling? Is that fantasy just "American"?

#### **ASSOCIATIVE QUESTIONS:**

What would you rather receive, a G.I. Joe or Barbie, or a set of Lincoln Logs (or American Girl doll)? Why? What would you rather GIVE? Why?

---

**Barbie the icon:**

from <http://www.marcdolls.ch/englilli.html>

Just cut and pasted so I have not corrected sentence structure...

The Barbie doll is the best known and most sold doll in the world and therefore a toy classic. Barbie is a registered trade mark of the Mattel company and represents a production line of fashion dolls in 1:6 scale. ... Fashion dolls existed for a long time before Barbie and the first known were reported to exist in France as early as the 13th century. Its reputation [as] a part of the western cultural history [can be merited to] the founder of the Mattel company and her concept that has constantly been refined over the years ... includes the following focal points:

- Styling of the Barbie doll
- Focus on fashion and trendy clothing
- Incorporation of miscellaneous ethnic objectives
- Expanding the product line with more doll personalities
- Development from a luxury doll to a mass production toy
- Special high detail productions for collectors besides playline dolls

The history of dolls began as early as the 14th century and dolls had been the ambassadors of the current fashion styles during these times. First dolls were made from wood, then porcelain and later from leather. It was not before the 19th century that dolls also became toys...

**History of dolls:**

from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doll>

[Info on this site could relate this Barbie case to other areas of the museum if you were so inclined, Greece (cycladic), Africa (Ashanti), Native American (Kachina), Japan (Haniwa)]

A doll is a model of a human being, often used as a toy for children. Dolls have traditionally been used in magic and religious rituals throughout the world, and traditional dolls made of materials like clay and wood are found in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe. The earliest documented dolls go back to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece and Rome. Dolls being used as toys was documented in Greece around 100AD. They have been made as crude, rudimentary playthings as well as elaborate art. Modern doll manufacturing has its roots in Germany going back to the 15th century. With industrialization and the appearance of new materials like porcelain and plastic, dolls were increasingly mass produced. During the 20th century dolls became increasingly popular as collectibles.

**Barbie's predecessor: Bild Lillie:**

from <http://www.marcdolls.ch/englilli.html>

(Just cut and pasted so I have not corrected sentence structure... NOTE: her "life" started as a cartoon, then was used for marketing purposes)

In the early fifties the German Cartoonist Reinhard Beuthien was asked to fill an illustration gap in the newspaper "Bild-Zeitung". In their first edition on June 24th 1952 Lilli was born for this purpose, she was a young, pretty and flippant girl that could turn the heads of her admirers, typical for the post war era in the "German economic-wonderland". These comics appeared until January 5th 1961 and always had a somewhat piquant for these days of the upcoming consumer boom and it contributed much to the initial success of the newspaper.

**Bild** wünscht Guten Tag!  
Gute Nacht kann einem auch jede Schlafmütze wünschen.

**Liebe Lilli!**

Aus den schwarz-weißen Zeitungsseiten hat Dada'sprung ins Farbige, Dreidimensionale gewagt. Ein junges Mädchen - helles, schönes, bezauberndes. Was von der Zeichnerin mit schwarz-weißer Strich-Signifikanz versprochen, wird jetzt ganz plastisch erlebbar. So lege ich mich denn hier vor und zugegeben - ein wenig eifersüchtig Deinen Verführerinnen und Verführern aus Herz.

Hans im Bild

**Ich habe den Führerschein**

- zum Mitfahren. Nehmen Sie mich deshalb im Auto mit! Ich halte immer hübsch den Mund und liege gut in den Kurven. Ich benötige mich sogar mit dem Hinterrufen. Dort kann ich den Autos, die Sie überholt haben, mitleidig nachwinken - wenn Sie es wünschen!



**Lilli**



„Du findest es empörend, was über mich in der Zeitung steht? Du bin ich ganz deiner Meinung - Immer wird die Hälfte unterschlagen!“

Das ist mir gestern passiert! Und was ich heute erlebte, lesen und sehen Sie morgen in BILD!

**Die wahre Geschichte**

**Bild** Novelle von heute

Wenn sie interessant und neu und nicht lang ist, heißt sie Novelle. Sie finden jeden Tag eine in BILD. Schlechte Geschichten (Verleumdungen eines hübschen jungen Mädchens) finden Sie unter der Rubrik „Lilli“.

**Gute Ausrede**

Ja, ich bin auch als Ausrede gut. Der Tante Eulalie können Sie sagen: „Ich kann dich leider nicht im Wagen mitnehmen.“ Dann flüsternd: „Ich habe nämlich schon eine andere junge Dame im Wagen.“ Sie brauchen ihr aber nicht zu verraten, wie lange Sie schon mit mir fahren.

**O mein Papa**



Reinhard Beuthien

das ist das Bild meines Vaters. Meine Mutter ist die Muse, die ihn verschwenderisch küßt.

**für sie**

**Weil Sie's sind**  
Will ich Ihnen sogar den Namen meiner Schneiderin verraten. Sie heißt Martha Maar, ist Inhaberin einer großen deutschen Puppenfabrik und gilt als erste Künstlerin im Reich der Puppenmode. Falls Sie einige Kostüme von mir sehen wollen - bitte:

**Irrtum eines alten Krokodils**

wer einem Weibe traut, schreitet auf Wasserlinsen über einen Teich. Dies ist die Ansicht eines alten Krokodils, in Kiplings Öschungelbuch. Glauben Sie ihm nicht, sondern Ihrer „Lilli“: Ich bleibe beständig.

**Mit Politik**

hebe ich mich bisher nicht beschäftigt. Eigenartigerweise gelingt es mir trotzdem, überall mit sanfter Gewalt meinen Kopf durchzusetzen.

**und ohne**

Sollte gelegentlich von „verflüchtenden“ Tendenzen in der Mode die Rede sein, so bin ich gern bereit, ohne viele Worte und im gutschitzenden Pull-over jede Diskussion zu entscheiden.

**Wenn Sie mich fragen**

„Hübsche Beine, was? Wer so kurze hat wie ich, kennt sich aus!“  
sagt Redaktionsdackel Rübexahl

**Kopferdrehen**

ist meine Spezialität. Arme und Beine sind genauso gelenkig. Unter „SPORT IN BILD“ sehen Sie mich bei der berühmten, nach dem italienischen Schlangennemmenschen Spaghetti benannten: Spagat-Übung, die auch Ihnen vor dem Frühstück zur Erzielung der schlanken Linie empfohlen wird!

**SPORT IN BILD**

**Bild** HOROSKOP

Sie werden lachen: ich bin Jungfrau, mit Goethe und Gretz Garbo unter dem gleichen Stern geboren.

Lilli became so well known and famous that the editors of Bild decided in 1953 to order an advertisement doll of the same physical outlines for the promotion of the newspaper. Max Weissbrodt a model designer specialist for the toy company: Hausser/Elastolin in Coburg, created this promotional doll from the basic drawings of Reinhard Beuthien.

**Bild**  
die größte deutsche Tageszeitung  
wagt für die Lilli  
Verbreitung

Lilli had been sold with dozens of different fashions. Early fashions are noted for their particular seductive design. Originally this doll had been produced as an advertisement gag for adults. But only one Year later the manufacturers realized that a totally different target-group became interested in this doll. But Lilli earned her biggest success as a playdoll. Therefore the selection was altered and the clothing supply-selection, enlarged. Each fashion was offered for sale separately. There are known to exist over

80 different Lilli fashions, she came as: Tennis player, dancer, ice-skater, flight attendant, nurse, Hula-girl, Hungarian, finally with different Dirndl-dresses, with jeans, in fur coats and in elegant evening gowns. (NOTE: There was even "Babs: Hong Kong Lilli")

The following come under the TMI category so I won't do anything more than to give you some links to Barbie's history, past and current, some of which I have cut and pasted into this document:

### Barbie History

<http://www.marcdolls.ch/englilli.html>

Barbie's secret German past... The thing to note is that Barbie's ancestor, Bild Lillie started life as a German cartoon character fashioned after Marlene Dietrich, perhaps.

### Barbie as art

<http://www.annstreetgallery.org/2012/05/blog/gendered-object-barbie-as-art/>

<http://www.designboom.com/weblog/cat/10/view/18916/barbie-recreations-of-art-classics.html>

[http://www.forbes.com/2009/03/05/barbie-boll-art-business\\_art.html](http://www.forbes.com/2009/03/05/barbie-boll-art-business_art.html)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/gallery/2012/jan/29/fine-art-posed-by-barbies#/?picture=385148477&index=0>

[http://www.etsy.com/shop/margauxlange?ref=seller\\_info\\_count](http://www.etsy.com/shop/margauxlange?ref=seller_info_count)

### Anthropomorphism of Barbie:

