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Guide to the Barbie Fashion Designer Papers, 1946-2023 123.1645

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

The Strong

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Rochester, NY 14607

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URL: <https://www.museumofplay.org/collections/brian-sutton-smith-library-archives-of-play/>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
Creator:	Mattel, Inc.
Title:	Barbie fashion designer papers
ID:	123.1645
Date [inclusive]:	1952-2023
Date [bulk]:	bulk, 1980-2000
Physical Description:	6.0 Linear Feet (9 archival boxes, 1 large AV box, 1 small AV box, 1 oversize box, 2 oversize folders)
Physical Description:	13.7 Gigabytes
Language of the Material:	English
Language of the Material:	The majority of the collection is in English, with some instances of French, German, and Japanese.
Abstract:	The doll designer papers were compiled by a designer of dolls and dolls' clothing. The papers include internal documentation from Mattel Inc. relating to the marketing and sales of Barbie doll products. The papers are comprised of design inspiration scrapbooks, doll clothing patterns, product packaging, correspondence, clippings, photographs, promotional materials, trade catalogs, newsletters, audio cassettes, VHS cassettes, and digital files. The bulk of the papers date from 1980 to 2000.

Preferred citation

Barbie fashion designer papers, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong.

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Historical Note

In the 1950s, Mattel Creations co-founder Ruth Handler observed her daughter Barbara playing with paper dolls and noted a gap in the age market for children's toys, as most dolls during that time were designed to be babies. Mattel's directors were at first unenthusiastic about Handler's idea for an adult

bodied fashion doll. Handler brought a German fashion doll, Bild Lilli, back from a trip to Europe as a souvenir and partnered with Jack Ryan to reimagine the design. The Barbie doll, named for Handler's daughter, was created and officially debuted at the International Toy Fair on March 9, 1959. According to Mattel, more than one billion Barbie dolls have been sold worldwide since its launch.

Since her introduction, Barbie has been outfitted with clothing and accessories inspired by fashion trends and representations of numerous career paths. Barbie's first years, the 1960s, were an era of cultural change for aesthetics and for women's roles in society. The design of Barbie's form and fashion reflected those changes and has continued to evolve alongside society through the present day.

Designer Charlotte Johnson created the first Barbie fashion line and continued to work as manager of the Barbie Designs Group until retirement in the early 1980s. Johnson supervised the start-up of production in Japan from 1957-1958. Sample maker Fumiko Miyatsuka worked closely with Johnson on the clothing production. Mattel designers who contributed to Barbie fashions include Kitty Black Perkins, Judith Brewer Curtis, Janet Goldblatt, Keith Hodges, Carol Spencer, and more. Sculptors who worked on Barbie's form include Martha Armstrong Hand, Joyce Christopher, and Aldo Favilli.

In the 1970s, toy safety standards lead to the creation of limited edition collectors dolls. Designs which used certain fabrics and small components had to be separated from those played with by children. Fashion designers who have collaborated with Mattel to create collectible dolls include Oscar de la Renta, Christian Dior, Donna Karan, Karl Lagerfeld, Bob Mackie, Diane Von Furstenberg, Vera Wang, and many more.

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Collection Scope and Content Note

The collection is comprised of material from Barbie doll and clothing designers and Mattel, Inc., and includes clippings, collected reference materials, correspondence, notes, patterns, photographs, product packaging, publications, scrapbooks, trade catalogs, audio cassettes, VHS tapes, and digital files. The papers document the design and production of Barbie dolls and clothing, the careers of designers and sculptors of dolls in the United States and Japan, Barbie doll collectibles and collectors, and the marketing and promotion of the Barbie brand by Mattel Inc. Dolls represented in this collection include Benefit Ball Barbie, Wave Barbie, Skipper, Tutti, Todd, and more.

The papers date from 1952 to 2023, with the bulk of materials dating from 1980 to 2000. Additional scope and content is listed for each series and subseries under the Contents List section of the finding aid.

The Doll design papers are arranged into two series which are further divided into subseries. The materials are housed in nine archival document boxes, one oversize box, two oversize folders, and two AV boxes.

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System of Arrangement

Series I: Product development, 1958-2023

Subseries A: Design, 1959-2023

Subseries B: Manufacturing, 1958-2023

Subseries C: Reference, 1959-2023

Series II: Mattel Inc., 1952-2023

Subseries A: Publications, 1954-2023

Marketing and promotional materials, 1952-2023

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Conditions Governing Access

Audiovisual and digital materials, including audio interviews and video footage, are restricted to on-site only access with required advanced notice for providing playback equipment.

Audio materials have been digitized by The Strong.

The remaining materials are open for use by staff of The Strong and users of its library and archives.

Conditions Governing Use

Though the donor has not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, they have given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Custodial History

The papers were donated to The Strong in April 2023 as a gift from an anonymous donor. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under 123.1645.

Processed by

Laura Boland, February - March 2024.

Processing Note

Digital folders' titles assigned with prefix, SeriesSubseries_Folder No_, followed by the original folder title, in some cases files received outside of a folder were moved to new folders created by the archivist.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Barbie dolls
- Barbie dolls -- Clothing
- Dollmakers
- Dolls
- Dolls -- Clothing
- Dolls -- Collectibles
- Dolls -- Collectors and Collecting
- Fashion -- History
- Fashion dolls
- Keene, Katy (Fictitious character)
- Paper dolls
- Patents
- Polly Pocket dolls
- Skipper (doll)
- Todd (doll)
- Tutti (doll)
- Toy Fair (trade show)
- United States. Patent and Trademark Office

- Bloomberg Businessweek
- Doll Forum Japan
- Doll Reader
- Mattel Matters
- Mattel Outlook
- Toymaker Topics
- Western Doll Collector
- Kokusai Boeki Kaisha Ltd.
- Multi-Toys (H.K.) Limited
- Pedigree Dolls and Toys Ltd.
- United States. Navy.
- Whitney Museum of American Art, Downtown Branch
- Armstrong-Hand, Martha
- Barad, Jill
- Christopher, Joyce
- Elam, Gayle
- Favilli, Ricardo Aldo
- Handler, Ruth
- King, Dana
- Mackie, Bob
- Paley, Jana Susan
- Rausch, Barb
- Spencer, Carol
- Stern, Susan (Filmmaker)

Collection Inventory

Series I: Product development, 1958-2023

Scope and Contents

This series contains materials related to the design and production of dolls and accessories. Within this series are compiled resources used in the design process, documentation of the production process, interviews with designers and dollmakers, and reference materials on dolls and doll clothing.

Sub-series A: Design, 1959-2023

Scope and Contents

This sub-series contains material related to the design process for dolls and doll clothing. Includes inspiration binders, style guides, paper doll patterns, sewing patterns, correspondence, and photographs. Of interest, in box 3 folders 1-6, is material related to a 1998 visit with Mattel's Japanese partner, Kokusai Boeki Kaisha Ltd. (KBK), including interviews with the "Barbie Dream Team," and photographs. Audio cassettes of the KBK interviews are housed in AV box 2. Also of interest, in box 3 folders 10 to 12, is correspondence, photo references, pattern, and clothing prototype for the Wave Barbie Doll given to the captain of United States Navy ship USS Barbey in 1982.

Title/Description

Instances

Barbie Fashions - advertisements, fabric samples, packaging, 1977-1987	box 1	folder 1-5
Barbie Style Guide received Jan. 2007, 2007	box 1	folder 6
Collectible trading cards, Barbie dolls and fashion [see also box 9 object 1], 1959-1979	box 1	folder 7-10
Collectible trading cards, Barbie dolls and fashion [see also box 9 object 1], 1959-1979	box 2	folder 1
"Family tree, trading cards (miniature), faces," binder, 1990-1999	box 2	folder 2-4
"Fashion design", designers' addresses list [redacted], 1981	box 2	folder 5
"Inspiration" binder, Barbie, 1990-1995	box 2	folder 6-9
Japan trip binder - Yokosuka Knitting Mills, reference #1 from Mr. I Tsunoda [Japanese], 1963	box 3	folder 1
Japan trip binder - Kokusai Boeki Kaisha Ltd. (KBK), reference #5 [Japanese], 1960	box 3	folder 2
Japan trip binder - Bob Mackie designs, 1991-1993	box 3	folder 3
Japan trip binder - references, 1997	box 3	folder 4
Japan trip binder - interviews with "Barbie Dream Team", 1998	box 3	folder 5
Japan trip binder - photos and reference, 1998	box 3	folder 6
Katy Keene comics paper dolls, info from Barb Rausch, 1950-2001	box 3	folder 7
Paper dolls, clothes, patterns [copies], 1946-1956	oversize 1	
Sew Easy patterns by Advance, Barbie doll clothes, 1961-1962	box 3	folder 8
Skipper, Tutti, Todd, reference material, Carol Spencer photos, 1964-1991	box 3	folder 9
USS Barbey, Wave Barbie doll, notes, references, correspondence, 1982	box 3	folder 10
USS Barbey, Wave Barbie doll, photo references, 1982	box 3	folder 11
USS Barbey, Wave Barbie doll, Wave uniform and patterns, 1982	box 3	folder 12
Barbie soft cover binder [see also box 1 folders 7-10 and box 2 folder 1], 1990s	box 9	object 1
Meeting with KBK interview, 1998 July 23	box AV2	cassette 1-3
IA_Folder 01_2012-2023_9 Barbie designers [20 files], 2012-2023	digital	folder 1
IA_Folder 02_2008-2023_KBK info on Barbie startup in Japan [14 files, 1 folder], 2008-2023	digital	folder 2
IA_Folder 03_2023_Paper doll books [2 files], 2023	digital	folder 3

Sub-series B: Manufacturing, 1958-2023

Scope and Contents

This sub-series contains material related to doll sculpting and factory production. Materials are comprised of correspondence, photographs, 35 mm slides, patent copies, handwritten notes, printed references, and audio/visual materials. The content includes information related to doll sculptors Martha Armstrong-Hand, Joyce Christopher, and Aldo Favilli.

Of interest, box 4 folder 7 contains information on United States patents: 12431, Barbie figurine; 3234689, doll construction for natural movements and positions; 689055, Barbie trademark registration; 3411235, Eyelash-simulating rooted fibre.

Also of interest in box 4 folders 8-9 are photographs showing the production process, including the Benefit Ball Barbie, at Chang An plant. According to slide description by TW Wong, MTHK had two manufacturing plants in China, the Chang An Plant and the Guan Yao Plant. Each plant employed around 2,500 workers and produced 400,000 Barbie dolls per week, plus Barbie fashions and some other products. Chang An Plant is located about one and a half hours away from the Hong Kong border.

Title/Description	Instances	
Armstrong-Hand, Martha, sculptor of dolls, references, correspondence, 1997-2004	box 4	folder 1
Asia trip - 35 mm slides, 1994	box 4	folder 2
Asia trip - photographs, 1994	box 4	folder 3-6
Barbie Dream Pack patent copies, notes, prints, references, 1958-2003	box 4	folder 7
Benefit Ball Barbie production at Chang An Plant - photographs, slides, 1992	box 4	folder 8-9
Favilli, Aldo, sculptor - head of Mattel sculpting dept. 1960s-2000, reference, correspondence [see also AV Box 2, cassette 4], 2000-2003	box 4	folder 10
Joyce Christopher Work Archives visit, notes, reference, correspondence, 2016	box 4	folder 11
Memo, request for list of fabrics and supplies, 1996	box 4	folder 12
Product flow chart, ca. 1980s	box 4	folder 13
Living Dolls: The Artistry of Martha Armstrong-Hand, Media Producers-Cambria, VHS, 1993	box AV1	object 1
Aldo Favilli, 2000, January 10	box AV2	cassette 4
IB_Folder 04_2012-2023_Barbie Sculptors [167 files, 21 folders], 2012-2023	digital	folder 4

Sub-series C: Reference, 1959-2023

Scope and Contents

This sub-series includes compiled reference materials, product line spreadsheets, published articles, and videos related to the history of dolls and doll collecting. Materials consist of magazine and newspaper clippings, VHS cassettes, digital files, printed spreadsheets, and handwritten notes.

Of interest in box 5 folders 3-5 is a draft and notes for "History of Design, Marketing, and Advertising of Mattel's Barbie Dolls," Thesis by Jana Susan Paley.

Also of interest, AV box 2, disk 1 includes several German Barbie videos: "Marsch ins Kinderzimmer," Anatomie der Puppe Barbie, (March into the Children's Room, Anatomy of the Barbie Doll), 1967/68, black/white, made by HR (Hessischer Rundfunk); Die Welt der Barbie (The World of Barbie), ca. 1968; Rückblende Barbie (Barbie Flashback), 35 Years, made by N3 (Nordeutscher Rundfunk), starring Carol Spencer, Ruth Handler, Joe Blitman; Traumwelt der Puppen (Dolls' Dreamworld) "Character dolls," by Ivan Steiger, Munich, ZDF (Zweites deutsches Fernsehen)

Title/Description	Instances	
Barbie Talk, monthly feature in The Western Doll Collector, by Gayle Elam, 1986	oversize Box 1	folder 1
Clippings, 1989-2020	oversize Box 1	folder 2
Clippings, 1985-2009	oversize Box 1	folder 3
Doll Forum Japan, vol. 19, with English guide [Japanese and English], 1998	box 5	folder 1
"For Diane scrapbook 199," - notes, articles, advertisements, reference, 1985-1996	box 5	folder 2
"For Diane scrapbook", 1982-2002	oversize Box 1	folder 4
"For Diane scrapbook", 1983-1993	oversize Box 1	folder 5
"History of Design, Marketing, and Advertising of Mattel's Barbie Dolls," Thesis, Jana Susan Paley - draft, notes, 1985	box 5	folder 3-5
"It's Not the Doll, It's the Clothes," BusinessWeek Magazine , 1961	box 5	folder 6
"Mattel Rises. Again." by Chris Barnett, 1985	box 5	folder 7
"Misc. articles from Doll Reader magazine, etc.", 1981-1991	box 5	folder 8
"Misc. Barbie clippings for Stacy" [some materials in French], 1997-2021	oversize Box 1	folder 6
"People, Places, and Spaces: Exploring the American Century," Whitney Museum of American Art, family guide, 1999-2000	box 5	folder 9
Product and design spreadsheets, Barbie, Barbie fashions, family dolls, 1959-1998	box 5	folder 10-11
Product line spreadsheets, Barbie Museum inventory, 1959-1998	box 5	folder 12-13
<i>Barbie Nation: An Unauthorized Tour</i> , Susan Stern, VHS, 1998	box AV1	object 2

<i>Doll Art</i> , Sirocco, VHS [see also box 8 folder 11], 1996	box AV1	object 3
<i>The Doll Makers: Women Entrepreneurs 1865-1945</i> , Sirocco, VHS [see also box 8 folder 11], 1995	box AV1	object 4
<i>Dolls in Playland</i> , BBC, VHS, undated	box AV1	object 5
<i>Forever Barbie</i> , M.G. Lord, VHS, undated	box AV1	object 6
<i>Petite Elite: Miniature Museum and Gallery</i> , VHS, 1993	box AV1	object 7
<i>Rosalie Whyte Museum of Doll Art</i> , VHS, 1994	box AV1	object 8
<i>Secret Life of Barbie</i> , ABC Documentary, VHS, 1998	box AV1	object 9
Barbie reports Germany, DVD RW [German], 1967-1994	box AV2	disk 1
IC_Folder 05_2019-2023_Carol Spencer [5 files], 2019-2023	digital	folder 5
IC_Folder 06_2008-2023_German TV documentary on Barbie [6 files], 2008-2023	digital	folder 6
IC_Folder 07_2002-2024_Itemized list of dolls and patterns etc. packed in January [85 files, 10 folders], 2002-2024	digital	folder 7
IC_Folder 08_2010-2023_Max Factor and Bud Westmoreland [3 files], 2010-2023	digital	folder 8
IC_Folder 09_2009-2023_OOAK doll scans for Strong [30 files], 2009-2023	digital	folder 9
IC_Folder 10_2012-2023_Ruth and Elliott Handler [6 files], 2012-2023	digital	folder 10
IC_Folder 11_2008-2023_UFDC donations [51 files, 4 folders], 2008-2023	digital	folder 11

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Series II: Mattel Inc., 1952-2023

Scope and Contents

This series contains materials published by Mattel Inc. including internally distributed materials and materials used for the marketing and promotion of Barbie dolls and other products. The materials consist of brochures, catalog and newspaper clippings, newsletters, photographs, press kits, published articles, references, and VHS tapes.

Sub-series A: Publications, 1954-2023

Scope and Contents

This sub-series holds materials published by Mattel Inc., including internally distributed documents and newsletters.

Title/Description	Instances
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"Engineering Department Report," Mattel Engineering [copy], 1954	box 6	folder 1
Executive Briefing, January 17, 1991, 1991	box 6	folder 2
"Fashion, Kids and Toys," Ogilvy and Mather, 1987	box 6	folder 3
Great Race Review, 1976	box 6	folder 4
In Motion, Mattel Inc., 1986	box 6	folder 5
MAA Monte Carlo Night registration form, 1992	box 6	folder 6
Mattel Employee Services Bulletin, 1974-1976	box 6	folder 7
Mattel Investment Plan, Annual Report, 1977	box 6	folder 8
Mattel Matters, employee newsletters, meeting notes re Barbie postage stamp, 1997-1998	box 6	folder 9
Mattel Matters, employee newsletters, references, 1995-2002	box 6	folder 10
Mattel Newsletter February 1987, 1987	box 6	folder 11
Mattel Outlook vol. 1 no. 1, 1973	box 6	folder 12
"The Merchant of Toys," Mattel Inc. publication, by Elliott Handler, 1976	box 6	folder 13
'Movin' with Mattel, Plant 4-Distribution Center, 1976	box 6	folder 14
Product Safety and Quality Standards, 1986	box 6	folder 15
Toymaker Topics, 1959-1967	box 6	folder 16
Toy Topics, 1974-1979	box 6	folder 17
"Years..... Years of Dolls," Mattel Toy Co., reference copy, 1974	box 6	folder 18
The World of Barbie Collecting. Mattel Inc., VHS, 1993	box AV1	object 10
IIA_Folder 12_2023_Itemized list of Mattel information [1 file], 2023	digital	folder 12
IIA_Folder 13_2012-2023_Mattel Engineering book [34 files], 2012-2023	digital	folder 13

Sub-series B: Marketing and promotional materials, 1952-2023

Scope and Contents

This sub-series contains information used for marketing and promotion of Barbie doll products and other Mattel Inc. products. Materials are comprised of catalog and newspaper clippings, brochures, press kits, promotional materials for the 2000 NY Toy Fair, price list, and photographs. Audiovisual materials include VHS cassettes of Barbie commercials and infomercials, compilation videos used for marketing presentations, and Mattel Inc. employees' press appearances.

Title/Description	Instances	
Barad, Jill articles, Country Rose Barbie press release, 1997	box 7	folder 1

Barbie catalog clippings [some in Japanese], 1964-1983	box 7	folder 2
Benefit Ball Barbie, Classique Collection, promotional material [see also AV Box 1, object 10], ca. 1990s	box 7	folder 3
Friends of Barbie, Mattel catalog, Spielzug [German], copies, 1967-1979	box 7	folder 4
Handler, Ruth, photo, last approved. Charlotte Johnson, references, 1997, and undated	box 7	folder 5
Market research - Holiday Caroler Barbie, photographic prints, undated	oversize 1	folder 2
Marketing information, 1997	box 7	folder 6
Mattel catalogs [some in German], 1964-1973 and undated	box 7	folder 7
Marketing research studies, notes, reference, 1990	box 7	folder 8-10
Mattel marketing research, testing of 1994 and 1995 Barbie mass market collector dolls, 1994-1995	box 7	folder 11
Mattel Toys catalogs, reference copies, 1952-1971	box 7	folder 12
Mattel Toys catalogs, reference copies, 1952-1971	box 8	folder 1-3
Mattel Toys, 1990 international product seminars, 1989-1990	box 8	folder 4-5
"Nobody Even Comes Close," Mattel Toys brochure, 1985	box 8	folder 6
Press kit, Barbie, 1994	box 8	folder 7
Price list, 1962 March 1	box 8	folder 8
Polly Pocket, dolls, educational toys - advertisements, references, stickers, 2002	box 8	folder 9
"Sindy- The Changing Face of a Legend," catalog, Pedigree Dolls & Toys Ltd., 1986	box 8	folder 10
Sirocco Productions, Inc. correspondence re doll videos and possible Carol Spencer video biography [see also AV box 1, object 3-4], 1996	box 8	folder 11
Toy Fair 2000, Mattel promotional materials [see also box 9 object 2], 2000	box 8	folder 12
NY Toy Fair 2000 binder [see also box 8 folder 12], 2000	box 9	object 2
1998 New York Toy Fair Barbie Entrance Sizzle, VHS, 1998	box AV1	object 11
"Barbie as Scarlet," infomercial, ECN Productions Inc., VHS, 9/8/1994	box AV1	object 12, 13
Barbie "Be Anything," anthem, MAAT115, VHS, 2/16/1999	box AV1	object 14
Barbie compilation reel for 3M presentation, VHS, 1993-1997	box AV1	object 15
First Barbie commercial, VHS, undated	box AV1	object 16

Barbie Pink Jubilee Celebration, multi-image show, VHS, 4/10/1989	box AV1	object 17
"Dr. Barbie," <i>Good Day Atlanta</i> , WAGA-TV CBS, VHS, 1994 July 7	box AV1	object 18
<i>Good Morning America</i> , Dana King and Carol Spencer, VHS, 4/22/1993	box AV1	object 19
Mattel 1994 35th Anniversary Barbie Festival, auction, VHS, 1994	box AV1	object 20
Mattel 1994 35th Anniversary Barbie Festival, gala, VHS, 1994	box AV1	object 21
Mattel 1994 35th Anniversary Barbie Festival, general session, VHS, 1994	box AV1	object 22
Mattel, Barbie historical reel, VHS, 1959-1992	box AV1	object 23
Mattel: GWTW Fashions, VHS, 1/25/1995	box AV1	object 24
"The Power of Mattel," video presentation, VHS, undated	box AV1	object 25
"Ruth Handler/ Barbie's Creator," <i>Showbiz Today</i> , CNN, VHS, 7/27/1994	box AV1	object 26
"We Girls" commercial, 2137 end, VHS, undated	box AV1	object 27
"The World of Barbie Collectibles," infomercial on collection 1990's collector dolls, VHS, 9/5/1995	box AV1	object 28
IIB_Folder 14_2002-2023_Articles on Mattel or Barbie [19 files, 5 folders], 2002-2023	digital	folder 14
IIB_Folder 15_2014_Barbie 5H Sizzle [1 file], 2014	digital	folder 15
IIB_Folder 16_2023_Presentations [3 files], 2023	digital	folder 16
IIB_Folder 17_2023_Skipper dolls [52 files], 2013-2023	digital	folder 17

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