

Identifying German Character Dolls

Mary Gorham Krombholz
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A challenge to artists in Munich, Germany, in 1908 changed the doll industry forever. Invited by the Hermann Tietz department store to create dolls resembling real children, a group of artists responded by making dolls bearing remarkably lifelike expressions, wearing children-of-the-street clothing. The overwhelmingly positive reaction to the exhibition of their work at the store inspired major German doll manufacturers to produce a new kind of doll, one very

different from those that had dominated dollmaking up to that time. This was the birth of what has become known as the German character doll. Character dolls were produced in the first few decades of the twentieth century by a wide range of manufacturers and are highly sought-after by collectors today. For years confusion has abounded as to the proper identification of these dolls, as different factories made different parts and yet other factories, often relying on home workers, assembled the dolls. In this comprehensive, profusely illustrated book, veteran researcher Mary Gorham Krombholz unravels the mysteries behind the production of these dolls and identifies the makers of their bisque heads. Relying on firsthand research, often conducted on the very grounds in Germany where they were made, and primary sources, she documents the complex and labor-intensive processes by which character dolls were produced in the two major dollmaking areas of Thuringia: Waltershausen and Sonneberg. Individual and group photos of more than 800 character dolls, accompanied by detailed captions including highlighted markings, dominate this invaluable volume. Personal historical accounts by those who worked for the doll manufacturers, along with hand-colored period photos, shed light on the specific tasks entailed in every aspect of the dollmaking process, from mold making to glass-eye blowing to assembling the shipping boxes. Unequaled in depth and breadth, *Identifying German Character Dolls* is an enlightening and enthralling reference that every character-doll collector must own.