

Dolls

Weekly Times Column

By Warren Joel

The old doll sitting on Grandmother's bed may be the most valuable item in the house. Porcelain and bisque head dolls can sell for many thousands of dollars and have a very strong following.

As with all collectables there are dolls and then there are the collector's dolls, so how do we tell the difference? There are several key factors to look for in the antique doll market. One of the most important elements will be the condition of the porcelain or bisque head. Because of the very nature of a doll and the fact that it was used or played with by young children, some damage is inevitable. Even the most minor crack will reduce the value by up to 90%.

The maker of the doll is a prime element in determining its value. The makers' marks can be found on the back of the head, quite often hidden under the doll's wig. One of the most common and prolific doll makers is the German maker Armand Marseille. This mark is indicated by an impressed "AM" and quite often associated with the number 390. The number indicates the size of the doll's head. At the very top of the collector's market would be a French Jumeau automata. Automata refers to a mechanically moving wind up doll. There are recorded sales of over \$100,000 for these types of dolls.

Other elements to look for are the type and condition of the body, eyes and clothing. When we combine a signed bisque head, glass paperweight eyes that open and close, original body and clothing, we are heading towards a top value item. And as elements are removed, the price reduces.

A word of caution, there are lots of reproductions and copies on the market and as always the devil is in the detail.

Next week: Taxidermy

Free Valuation for Weekly Times readers.

Byjoel will do a free valuation of your collectables via email. If you send a photo and description of your item to valuations@byjoel.com.au I will access the item and respond.

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Warren is a third generation auctioneer and valuer specialising in Art, Antiques and Collectables, accredited by the Commonwealth in 2002 different areas of collectables.

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