



# Playing with GOOGLIES

*by Alf Ertslund*

Googlies should be celebrated this year. For more than one hundred years they have been a part of the great common heritage of dolls we all have enjoyed and shared. Few other dolls have the same ability to evoke a need for playing. Each time you look at them they seem so happy and content, flirty and mischievous and they really bring out the best in you. They are fun to display, alone, or with other dolls.

Of course a few of them are grumpy, sulky and angry, but their caricatured expressions are as enjoyable as the smiling ones.

Rose O'Neill's creation of the Kewpies was the impetus for the googlies which followed shortly after production of the Kewpies in doll form. Googlies have been produced in various materials: bisque, paper

mache, celluloid, plastic, rubber and metal. In this article I will focus primarily on the classic googlies with heads of bisque.

Doll collecting was a rather new hobby in Norway when we hesitantly started out in 1982. Like most novice collectors, we collected what we found in the market. Finding any kind of dolls was a major event, whether it was about a simple Armand Marseille, a baby doll by Kämmer and Reinhardt, or a slightly more sophisticated doll from CF Kling.

Looking back at the end of 1800 and the beginning of 1900, Norway was a rather poor country. Only a few stores had dolls in their assortment. Most dolls were simple china or bisque head dolls, often attached to homemade cloth bodies.



"Julia," Kestner 221 size 5.



"Rödluvan," (Little Red Riding Hood)  
AM 200, almost 10 inches.



From Left: "Millie," (named after Mildred Seeley, of course.) "Agnes," "Ada," and "Julia."



K&R had a sales office in Copenhagen, explaining why so many K&R 126 and a few other molds found their way to Norway in the early 20th century.

Many rare and expensive character dolls were brought to light during the 1980's and 90's, and some of us probably remember the record-breaking prices from auction houses around the world.

These were also the decades when several new books on dolls came onto the market. Serious collectors and researchers shared their experiences and gave us better knowledge about dolls.

I remember one particular photo of a SFBJ googly, mold 245 in a book by François Theimer, Ann Marie and Jacques Porot,

"Ada," and Maja, a Kämmer & Reinhardt, 131, 16 inches tall. She is wearing a Norwegian National costume from Telemark.



"Agnes," a Kestner 221, size 7 and her little Steiff cat.

released in 1986. This photo of a ginger hair googly with huge eyes really opened our hearts and helped us in discovering these treasures.

We suddenly had a new interest, and the hunting for googlies had begun. As the years passed by, we became more used to attending auctions and fairs abroad. This was the only way to find specific dolls. Kestner googlies were rather easy to find, but at that time we found them too expensive for our budget.

We had also developed interest in French Bébés and German character dolls, and it was sometimes





Carlotta, a SFBJ 245, is a big girl at size 4.



"Didot", Hertel Schwaab & Co molds 172, 14 inches.

hard to choose one doll for another. This is a well-known issue for many collectors with a limited budget.

In the beginning of 1990's we were offered several dolls from a collector in Sweden, who had been collecting since the early seventies. We received some lovely photos and among them were some charming Kestner googlies. We had a minor problem however. Based on our financial situation, we were hesitant to buy anything. Yet, based on our emotions we could simply not say no. The only way to solve this was to make a visit and see for ourselves.



Group of Armand Marseille googlies, mold 200 and 210. Largest is 12 inches.



"Ada," by her chair.  
Size 10

This is how we were introduced to "Agnes," "Julia" and "Rödluvan," (Little Red Riding Hood). The meeting with these irresistible dolls utterly influenced our perception of googlies. The seller was a sweet, elderly lady who had loved her dolls dearly for decades and gave each of them specific names provided the original owners had not named them.

We returned home with an empty wallet, but we brought with us a suitcase full of wonderful dolls. Other googlies were gradually added to our collection. Shortly after our meeting with the Kestner googlies, we were offered a large, wonderful K&R 131 from another collector.





Playing in a circle

This new relationship has brought much joy to us during the years. She was definitely the first googly that invited us to play with her and thus, she obtained a very prominent position in our house. This led naturally to regular photo sessions in the garden. For a couple of middle-aged men, this was pretty fun, and brought many cheerful comments from family and friends.

Even though we continued collecting other kind of dolls, googlies always had our attention, and now and then made their entries into our collection. Traveling to France in search of dolls was great fun in the 80's and 90's. That is where we found our Hertel, Schwab & Co, mold 172. Almost 15 years later, a long awaited companion, arrived, a mold 173. She is so far our last purchase and came unplanned and unexpected early last summer. I believe she has the biggest smile there is.

We still hoped to obtain the googly that captured our attention, and the search for a large SFBJ 245 continued. A few were up for auction, but they slipped out of our hands for one reason or another. It actually took 25 years of searching to find the one we wanted. Our reservations when it came to price range had vanished a long time ago.

When Carlotta arrived, she was still as highly appreciated as she would have been during our first years of collecting. Carlotta, a SFBJ 245, is a big girl at size 4. Her eyes are huge, and her inviting smile completely irresistible.



"Herdis," Porzellanfabrik Mengesgereuth. Marked PM 950, 12 inches



"Millie," Kestner 221, size 6 with her Steiff teddy bear.





A group of smaller googlies holding a tea party. From left: Kestner all bisque, 292; Wislisenus, bisque head, marked AW; Limbach, marked SK 10; Kestner all bisque 292, and far right a Kestner, 111 with jointed knees and elbows, 5.25 inches. In front another Kestner all bisque mold 189, 4.25 inches.



"Mirella," SFBJ 245, size 4 in her Navy Suit, 13.5 inches.

"Thea," Einco, rarer shoulder head version. Mold 8764, size 3. Head made by Gebrüder Heubach. She stands 12 inches tall.



"Thea" Einco, mold 8764, size 3 and "Nurse Beetle," a "Hug me Kiddie" with composition mask face, with her syringes. Both dolls produced by Eisenmann & Co.



Group of Gebruder Heubach googlies



Just one year after, we randomly found Mirella, another 245, also a size 4! They have slightly different looks and body types. First one has the classical SFBJ toddler body with slanted hips, the other also with a quite chubby body, more similar to the usual body used for SFBJ character dolls. They are a wonderful couple well worth the long wait.

It is a real challenge to present so many googlies with so many different characteristics. Some of them stand more clearly out than others with exquisite defined characteristics. It has been such great fun photographing these dolls. This was also a way to become even more familiar with all the different expressions. Like I mentioned in the beginning, they are not all laughing and smiling. Some are quite thoughtful,

"Carlotta" standing, and "Lotta," an SFBJ 245/ 23, 9 inches tall. She has tipped over backwards into a large Marklin carriage.



Gebruder Heubach girl with top knots playing with a jump rope. The two smiling dolls at the right are the seldom seen mold 8995. The largest doll in this group is 11 inches.



"Nanette" H, S&Co, 173 and "Didot" HS&Co, 172.





Maja, a K \* R 131, clearly enjoys being photographed.

and some quite modest or shy. By photographing them in different angles, a new expression appears. And by putting two or more of them together, new situations and new emotions emerge.

Our collection is far from complete, and probably never will be. The most important thing has been the joy of collecting. It is a goal in itself. Along the way one will need enthusiasm, patience and intuition. These are qualities that do not always go so well together, but sometimes can give amazing results. The googlies will definitely keep on bringing us a little extra sunshine every day.

*Dolls from the collection of Alf Ertslund and Svein Hellberg.*