

RAYNAL LENCI-TYPE DOLLS

by Dominique Pennegues

Raynal cloth dolls are known internationally for their artistic qualities, however, it's easy to see that their production was inspired from its beginning by Elena König Scavini's own Lenci dolls.

The first advertisement for Raynal dolls, an ethnic caricature doll representing a chubby figure from Normandy with large hands and widely spread fingers, appeared in the July 1927 *Playthings* magazine alongside classic dolls. There is additional evidence that Raynal dolls were influenced by

Margarete Steiff and Elena König Scavini. We know that the earliest dolls manufactured by Margarete Steiff in 1905 were dolls representing ethnic comic characters that were often seen in the comics. Mama Katzenjammer, Missus and Der Captain are probably the most famous caricature dolls produced by Margarete Steiff after the famous comic strip "The Katzenjammer Kids" published by Rudolph Dirks in 1897.

Elena König, most likely inspired by the felt creations of her talented predecessor, began in 1919 to introduce cartoonish dolls, sometimes close to grotesque, such as the rare black doll, with the pumpkin-shaped face and round eyes, the Dutch farmer and the Oriental belly dancer.

Raynal's first production of classic dolls were of very poor quality, with no artistic value at all, being made with a sateen molded mask and lower limbs attached to the body with metal buttons. But a short time later, another production made of molded and stuffed felt dolls with a "caricature look", allowed Raynal dolls to get better known on the U.S. market, where, at the time, only the luxurious Nicette dolls were exported with success as "Lenci-type" French dolls.

However, these Raynal caricature dolls, sold in France and abroad, as evidenced by the advertising shown in 1927 *Playthings*, appear to have been used mainly in France as door prizes and giveaways to clients at popular cabarets. The common thread that unites these caricature dolls is the quality of the clothing, often featuring fine organza and silk.

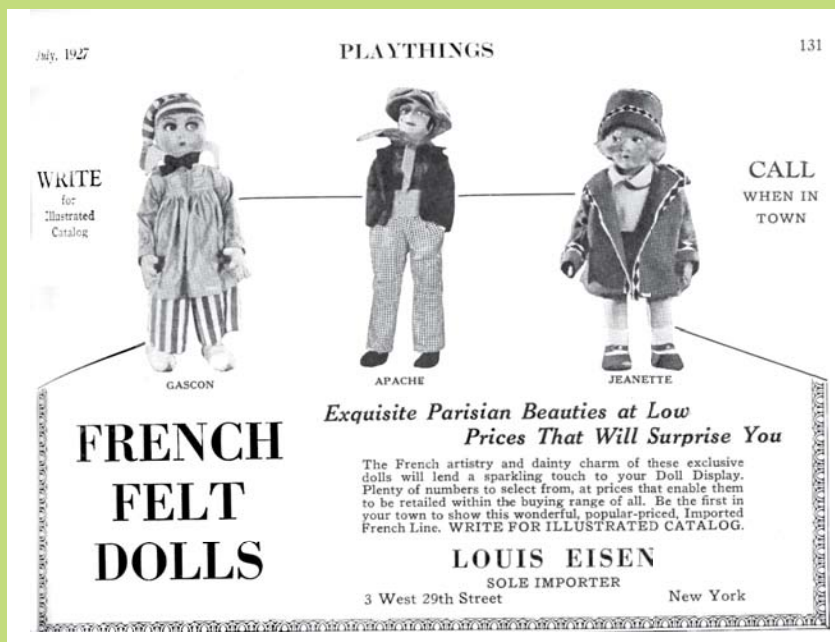
Like Margarete Steiff, Edouard Raynal and Marthe Gold, Raynal chose for their first comic ethnic doll a cartoon character in the person of a young Breton called

Bécassine by its creator Jacqueline River in 1905 for the magazine *La Semaine de Suzette*. The well known Parisian-Polish artist's cloth doll maker Stefania Lazarska was already producing this particular cloth doll since WWI. One may say that the particularity of Raynal's production during all its life was always been to copy other's successful creations with no "état d'âme" at all.

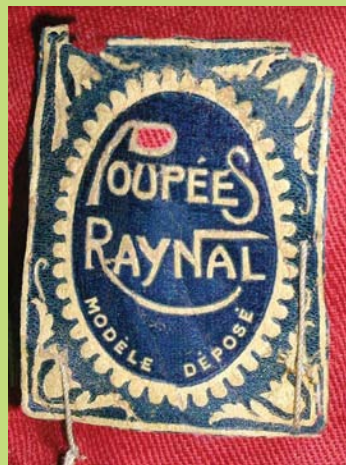
The 1925 Paris Art Deco Exhibit had been a great success for Lenci artistic all felt dolls so it is to be expected that by 1927, Raynal was

advertising a Lenci-type doll in *Playthings*, and the following year in the French magazine *Le Jouet Français*, their advertising showed a few more felt dolls totally inspired by Lenci dolls. Their lower prices allowed them to profitably compete with Lenci during the 20's.

From that point on until the end of the 30's, Raynal never stopped producing all felt dolls inspired by Lenci along with their more classical cloth dolls. This production even though very pleasant to see, had a very negative impact on Lenci's dolls business and an even more devastating one on Nicette's. However, our objective here is not to put the blame on Raynal, but to help collectors to know how to identify their dolls.



1927 ad in *Playthings* for "French felt dolls" imported by Louis Eisen. Doll on the left and the right are Raynal dolls, the doll in the center is a Gerb's. A mistake has been done in identifying the Raynal caricature who is dressed as a Normandy Peasant, not as Gascon as written. Raynal's low prices gave them a financial advantage.



First Raynal label, only found on the rare ethnic comic characters from 1925 and 1926.



Here are a few samples of Raynal's ethnic comic characters. First is a Becassine doll, probably the first cartoon-type doll produced under Raynal label. Stefania Lazarska first produced Becassine cloth dolls during WWI and after. Her Bécassine dolls met with a lot of success and were sold by the best Parisian stores, which explains Raynal's choice of this ethnic comic character. The features of Stefania Lazarska's Bécassine dolls are relatively faithful to the character drawn by Emile Joseph Pinchon for *La Semaine de Suzette* depicting a young Breton usually depicted wearing a green dress with white cotton coiffe and wooden clogs.

The Raynal couple respected in their interpretation of the young Bécassine the psychological traits of the young Breton Jacqueline Rivière gave her in the text, but differed somewhat from the representation in Emile Pinchon's drawings. Thus, the naivety and innocence of Becassine is expressed in Raynal's caricature by surprised large blue eyes, while Emile Pinchon's Becassine eyes are just black dots. For copyright reasons, we can safely assume that the reversed colors of the Raynal Becassine costume were designed to avoid prosecution by the authors of the French comic strip.

The second caricature doll is dressed as a Gascon peasant. She has the later Raynal label marked "Made in France" which indicates that Raynal had started exporting his creations at that time, as seen in the 1927 issue of *Playthings*.

The third doll is a Normandy peasant and the fourth is a Spanish Matador inspired by opera Carmen by French composer Georges Bizet. Note the large felt hands with spread fingers similar to those of comic ethnic dolls created by Margarete Steiff and later Elena Scavini. Here, the fingers have metallic wire inside the stuffed felt to make them flexible. 60 cm. Private collection. France.

Raynal label sewn on Gascon doll. This one says "Made in France" unlike that attached to the Becassine doll which did not mention the country of origin.



Third Raynal label used in 1927, and probably before.





First Raynal ad published in 1928 in *Le Jouet Français*. The dolls shown here are all felt with mitten hands. It was usual at the time to advertise dolls that had been produced earlier; we know for example that the Lenci-type seen in *Playthings* were already produced in 1927.



All felt doll as shown in the 1928 ad. (center doll). Private collection. U.S.A.

Note the red dot at the corner of the eyes.



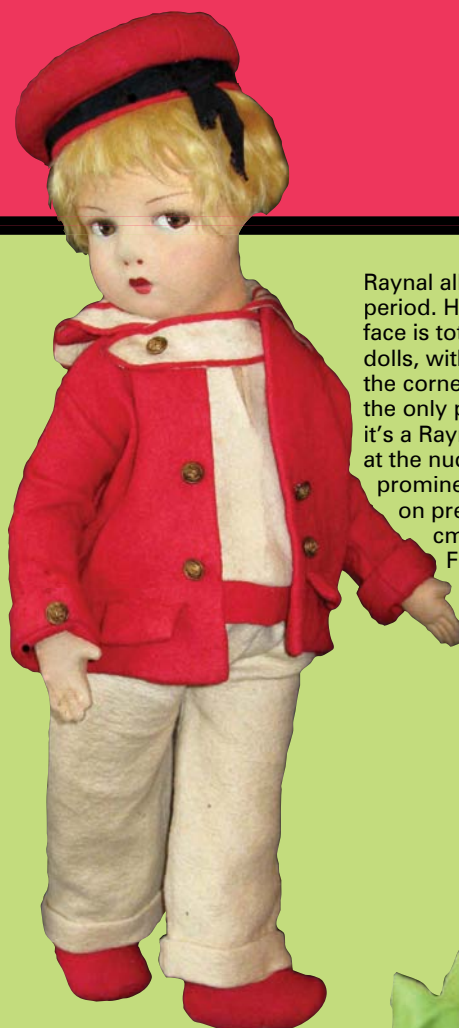
All felt doll as shown in the 1928 ad on the right and also in the 1927 *Playthings* ad on the right. The wooden umbrella is in silk and can be opened. Note the stuffed cloth felt body with its prominent bottom as this helps to date those early Lenci type Raynal dolls. 58 cm. Private collection. France.



Mitten hand type.



Detail of the painted eyes: Raynal tried during the first years of its production to have its all felt dolls looking like the well-known French Nicette dolls. As shown here, the painted eyes are totally like the Nicette ones, with a white eyelight upper dot into the iris and a small curved line down the opposite side of the iris painted in diagonal. This curved line is lighter than the color of the iris. The difference between Raynal and Nicette is in the red dots in the corner of the eyes...Raynal dolls often have them and Nicette usually do not.



Raynal all felt doll from same period. Here the painted face is totally like the Nicette dolls, without red dots in the corner of the eyes, so the only possibility to know it's a Raynal is by looking at the nude body with the prominent bottom as shown on previous photo. 60 cm. Private collection. France.



Ad from 1928 *Le Jouet Français*. Dolls have an even more Lenci look like than earlier Raynal dolls.



Wearing an art deco dress is this all felt Raynal with her wooden jumping rope (another idea stolen from Lenci). Note the new hands with separate fingers like the Lenci dolls of the same period. 60 cm. 1928. Private collection. France.



Detail of the painted eyes: like some Nicette dolls from same period, there is a large lighter colored dot painted into the curved diagonal line and no red dots in the corner of the eyes. To distinguish this doll from a Nicette, one has to look at the hand with separate fingers, knowing Nicette dolls always had mitten type hands.



Detail of the new hands with separate fingers.

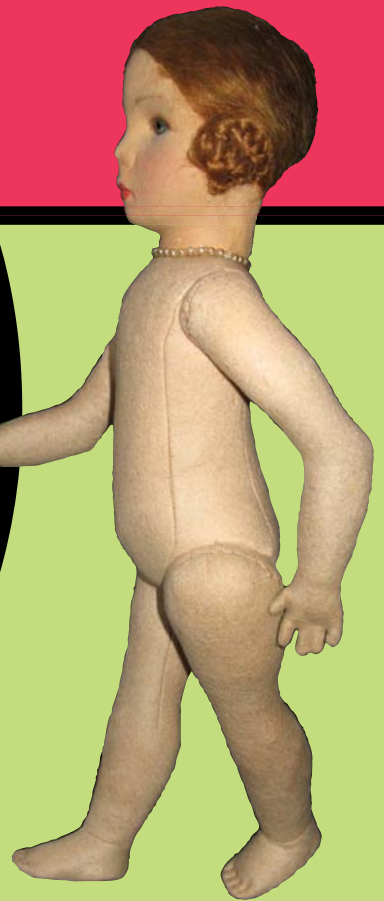


This hairstyle will be used by Raynal till the middle of the 30's. Courtesy Musée de la Poupée Paris.

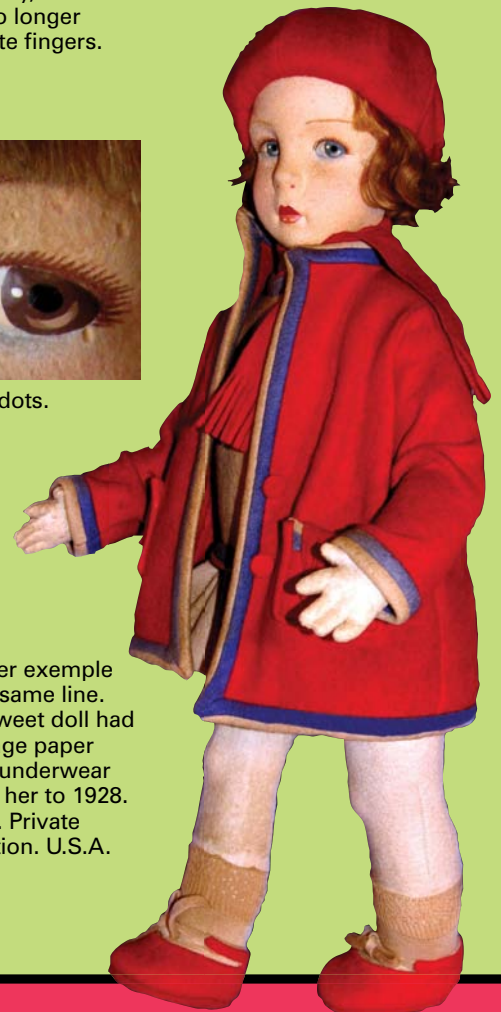


Portrait. Note the hair style totally inspired from Lenci dolls, and the rare blue eyes. This new line has a pearl necklace. 42 cm. Private collection. France.

Detail of the new stuffed felt body, similar to Lenci dolls. The bottom is no longer prominent. Hands have separate fingers.



Detail of the painted eyes with red dots.



Another example of the same line. This sweet doll had a vintage paper in her underwear dating her to 1928. 42 cm. Private collection. U.S.A.



Beautiful "Nini" look-alike. One may see Raynal had no qualms about copying Lenci's successful creations. Courtesy Musée de la Poupée. Paris.



The features of this interesting African shepherd are typical of Parisian caricatures from the 20's and 30's. This doll has a new Lenci-like molded felt body. We believe this interesting doll was produced in 1931 to be on the market at the time of the Paris International Colonial Exhibition of 1931. The same doll was also produced with a blue and red Zouave costume, holding a drum. Courtesy Musée de la Poupée Paris.

By the early 30's Raynal had achieved enough popularity that they felt comfortable making their own innovations such as the painting of the eyes whereby the curved line is now horizontal. It will remain this way till the end of the Raynal cloth doll production. They also adopted the new Lenci-like molded felt body while Nicette kept the stuffed body.



Large Lenci type with unusual knitted wool winter suit and original tag. Private collection. France

Right: The new line was shown with new leather shoes and different white jersey socks. 42 cm. Private collection. France.





New bodies from the early 30's: these two bodies will be used until the end of production. On the left, the body is coated and oil painted, the arms and legs are white/grey felt. The doll on the right has a grey/white molded felt body, with light pink felt arms and legs. Raynal always used two colors of felt for this line but we can't find the reason for it.



A little boy in pajamas, once again a copy of Lenci's 1926 beautiful 300 series Renato, with a smoking jacket, white shirt, pants and slippers. This Raynal does not have a wooden pipe but he may have when sold. The original black tie was missing and has been replaced by a black bow. 60 cm. Private collection. France.



Little golfer inspired by Lenci's. This mold is probably one of the most attractive Raynal Lenci-type ones. He has leather brown shoes, like those used by Lenci. Courtesy Galerie de Chartres. France.



School boy, knitted sweater, felt short pants, brown leather shoes. 52 cm. Private collection. France.



School boy inspired from Lenci's 1927, 300/10 series, with hand knitted jumper, white felt shirt, felt short pants and knitted socks with brown leather shoes. 52 cm. Private collection. France.



Tennis boy. Hand knitted jumper, white felt shirt and long pants, leather shoes. 60 cm. Private collection. France.



Bridemaid and groomsman couple. *L'illustration*, December 1934.



All felt doll. This mold was also used for classic Raynal dolls with molded felt heads on stuffed cloth bodies. 48 cm. Courtesy Theriaults. U.S.A.



Two dolls dressed in a nice "princess style". The same dolls, but with more elaborate long dresses made by Jeanne Lanvin were offered by Raynal to the future Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret in honor of King Georges jubilee in 1935. Those two dolls were exhibited at Buckingham Palace's Royal Childhood from July to September 2014.



Rare all felt boy dressed in Naval Officer costume made of dark blue wool with brass buttons, shirt, tie, socks and black leather shoes, cap with brim decorated with brass anchor and braid. Courtesy Theriaults. U.S.A.

The Garde Républicain used to decorate Raynal's stand at the 1937 Paris International Exposition dedicated to Art and Technologie in Modern Life. In honor of the coronation of King Georges VI, Marthe Gold Raynal decorated the stand with a background showing a French castle. On the front, on each side of a majestic staircase, were dolls dressed as Garde Republicains, to honor a "prince and a princess" as well as other dolls dressed in ethnic costumes to show the rich French patrimony. 48 cm. Courtesy Musée de la Poupée Paris. France.



Beautiful all felt princess type with rhodoid hands. The long dress with silk velvet jacket was also made in pink. Private collection. U.S.A.



Rare Princess type doll with a molded open/close mouth showing white teeth. This mold was inspired by the one used for new dolls produced by Raynal in Rhodoid (non flammable celluloid type material). This is the second largest doll Raynal ever made and measures 72 cm high. Hands are rhodoid Private collection. France.

Note the two tone lips. Golden medal represent the little "Princess of America" Shirley Temple.



Large 1m 15cm all felt doll, Princess type, probably produced to compete with SFBJ's Marianne and France which were offered to the English Princesses in 1938. This very unusual doll has light green hands, probably to suggest green gloves. All the fingers are separated. We only know of one other doll like this one, with blond hair and skin color felt hands. Private collection. U.S.A.