

Barbie™

POWER & STYLE

★
*Teen-Age
Fashion
Model*

HER MOST
ICONIC LOOK

THE WOMEN WHO
INSPIRED HER

HER INFLUENCE
ON FASHION

COLLECTOR'S EDITION



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BARBIE BIO



TEEN-AGE FASHION MODEL

• 1959 •

★ **FULL NAME:** Barbara Millicent Roberts, a teen model from the fictional town of Willows, Wisconsin.

★ **THE INSPIRATION:** Ruth Handler, Mattel co-founder and creator of Barbie, based the design in part on the character in a successful German comic strip called *Bild Lilli*.

★ **HER STYLE:** The sophisticated glamour of era icons like Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe and Rita Hayworth.

★ **CLOTHING DESIGN:** By Charlotte Johnson, a key Mattel designer who shaped and developed Barbie's fashion.

★ **DEBUT:** March 9, 1959, at the New York Toy Fair. The doll, which came with a swimsuit, sunglasses, earrings, heeled sandals and stand, cost \$3 and was available with either blonde or brown hair.



STORY OF AN ICON

A STAR is BORN



WITH HER ICONIC PONYTAIL, STRIPED BATHING SUIT AND FIFTIES STYLE, *TEEN-AGE FASHION MODEL BARBIE* DOLL REVOLUTIONIZED THE TOY WORLD, BECOMING ONE OF THE MOST CELEBRATED DOLLS OF ALL TIME



Ruth Handler, the creator of Barbie, posing with a group of Barbie dolls in 1961.



Since her debut in 1959, Barbie has had a worldwide profound cultural and social impact. She was the first doll with adult female features that allowed girls to imagine themselves in different roles, breaking away from traditional playtime expectations of mothers or caregivers. Throughout her history, Barbie has been able to reflect the social changes of each era, from fashion to ideals of female empowerment, inspiring new generations to imagine limitless futures. Today, Barbie continues as a globally impactful brand that evolves with the times, promoting values such as diversity, inclusion and



“My whole philosophy was that through the doll, the little girl could be anything she wanted to be.”

Ruth Handler





Along with the *Teen-Age Fashion Model Barbie* doll, 22 stylish outfits that reflected trends and were inspired by the films of the era were released in 1959. From top to bottom: The cover of the booklet included in the original doll packaging. A page of the 1959 catalog highlighting the outfits. A booklet page featuring an illustration of *Gay Parisienne*, one of the most sought-after outfits among collectors.



individuality.

The Barbie doll's origin story can be traced back to an idea Ruth Handler — creator of Barbie and co-founder of Mattel with her husband, Elliot — had after seeing her daughter play with paper dolls that depicted adult women. Handler identified a business opportunity to create a toy that would allow girls to let their imaginations soar. The turning point came in 1956 during a trip to Switzerland, when she discovered the *Bild Lilli* doll, based on a German comic book character, in a store. Handler noticed that it came with only one outfit and no option to buy others separately. This inspired her to create not only a new version of the doll, but also interchangeable clothes that girls could purchase separately, allowing them to imagine different life scenarios for their dolls. Mattel acquired the rights to *Bild Lilli*, and Handler developed her own version, envisioning more stylized figures imbued with the glamour of the era's movie stars.

On March 9th, 1959, *Barbie*, named after Handler's daughter Barbara, made her debut at the New York Toy Fair. Although buyers were initially skeptical about Barbie not resembling traditional dolls of the time, perceptions quickly changed. Convinced that girls were more interested in exploring the depths of their imaginations and a world of possibilities than in playing at being mothers, Handler created a targeted advertising campaign that addressed exactly this, with TV commercials that began airing in the spring. In its first year, the Barbie doll sold 350,000 units, becoming an overwhelming success. ★

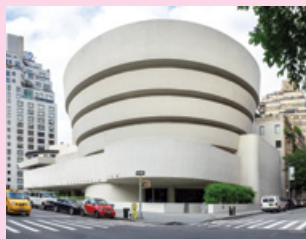


A look back at...

1959



Actress **Susan Hayward** wins the Oscar for Best Actress for the film *I Want to Live!*



In October, the **Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum** opens in New York City



Jazz icon **Billie Holiday** dies in New York



The musical film ***Gigi*** wins the Oscar for Best Picture



The first **Grammy Awards** ceremony is held in Beverly Hills, California



@sereinne_
Fashion Expert
& Designer

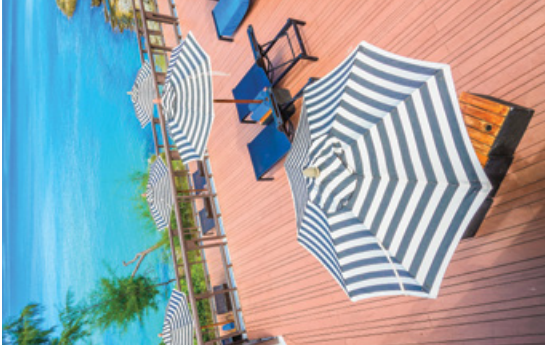
A Powerful Classic

Gold hoops, one of the most traditional jewelry pieces, complement this timeless look.



Glamorous Stripes

The swimsuit features a chevron-like pattern, with stripes converging in a V-shape. The black-and-white contrast evokes the iconic beach umbrellas of the French Riviera, a popular holiday destination in the 1950s.



Feline Gaze

Cat-eye lenses, with dramatic, raised tips mimicking the shape of a cat's eyes, were a staple accessory in the 1950s and popularized by icons like Audrey Hepburn.



In Full Glamour

The first Barbie was available with blonde or brown hair. She wore a ponytail that gathered her long hair and curly fringes, created by Larry Germaine, a stylist from Universal Studios.

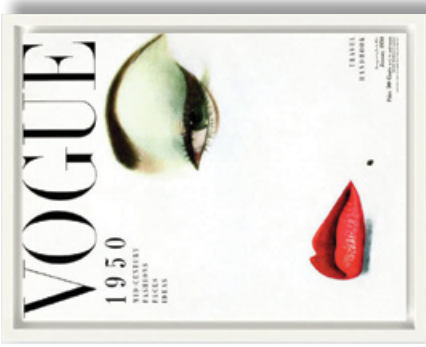
Dynamic Fabric

The jersey fabric of the era often featured textile elements such as lastex and Chromspun®, which emerged in the late 1950s, adding elasticity and shine to garments.



Statement Piece

A black open-toe heeled sandal adds the sophistication of evening footwear and the summery freshness that complements the swimsuit.



The Look of the Era

The glamour of Hollywood's Golden Age is also reflected in the doll's make-up: Marilyn Monroe's red lips, Brigitte Bardot's winged eyeliner, Elizabeth Taylor's blue eyeshadow and arched eyebrows in *Cleopatra* that conveyed a strong, determined woman, all feature on the doll.



Fashionable Silhouette

While the bikini was already popular, the one-piece swimsuit was still considered a timeless and elevated swimwear style. The strapless version, with cups and a length just above the hips, was one of the one-piece's most classic adaptations. Although by 1959 the trapeze silhouette that defined the 1960s was starting to appear, this look clearly shows the lingering influence of Dior's New Look that dominated the 1950s.



INSPIRING WOMEN

Elizabeth Taylor

ACTRESS + PHILANTHROPIST

An incomparable icon of film, fashion and activism, Elizabeth Taylor's violet eyes, jet-black hair and outsized talent captivated the world, cementing her as one of the most influential actresses of all time. Her style and glamour not only defined her film career but also inspired an entire generation. In 1959, the creation of the first Barbie doll immortalized several iconic elements of Taylor's signature aesthetic.

One of Hollywood's most famous actresses, Taylor's career began in childhood and spanned six decades. Born in London, she moved to Los Angeles at the age of seven, where she began her legendary film career. She rose to fame at the age of 12 with the film *National Velvet* and solidified her star status with films such as *A Place in the Sun*, *Giant* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Her performance in 1966's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* earned her a second Academy Award for Best Actress, following the one she received in 1961 for her role in *Butterfield 8*. Known for her versatility, Taylor shone in passionate dramas and epic productions like *Cleopatra*, with which she reached the peak of her popularity.

Once considered the most beautiful woman in the world, Taylor filmed more than 50 movies and worked with great film stars such as James Dean, Marlon Brando and the great love of her life, Richard Burton. The actress with a pin-up girl look in 1953.





The iconic actress in a seductive leopard-print swimsuit in 1954 (above). Taylor's Hollywood Walk of Fame star, awarded in 1960 for her countless contributions to the world of cinema (right).

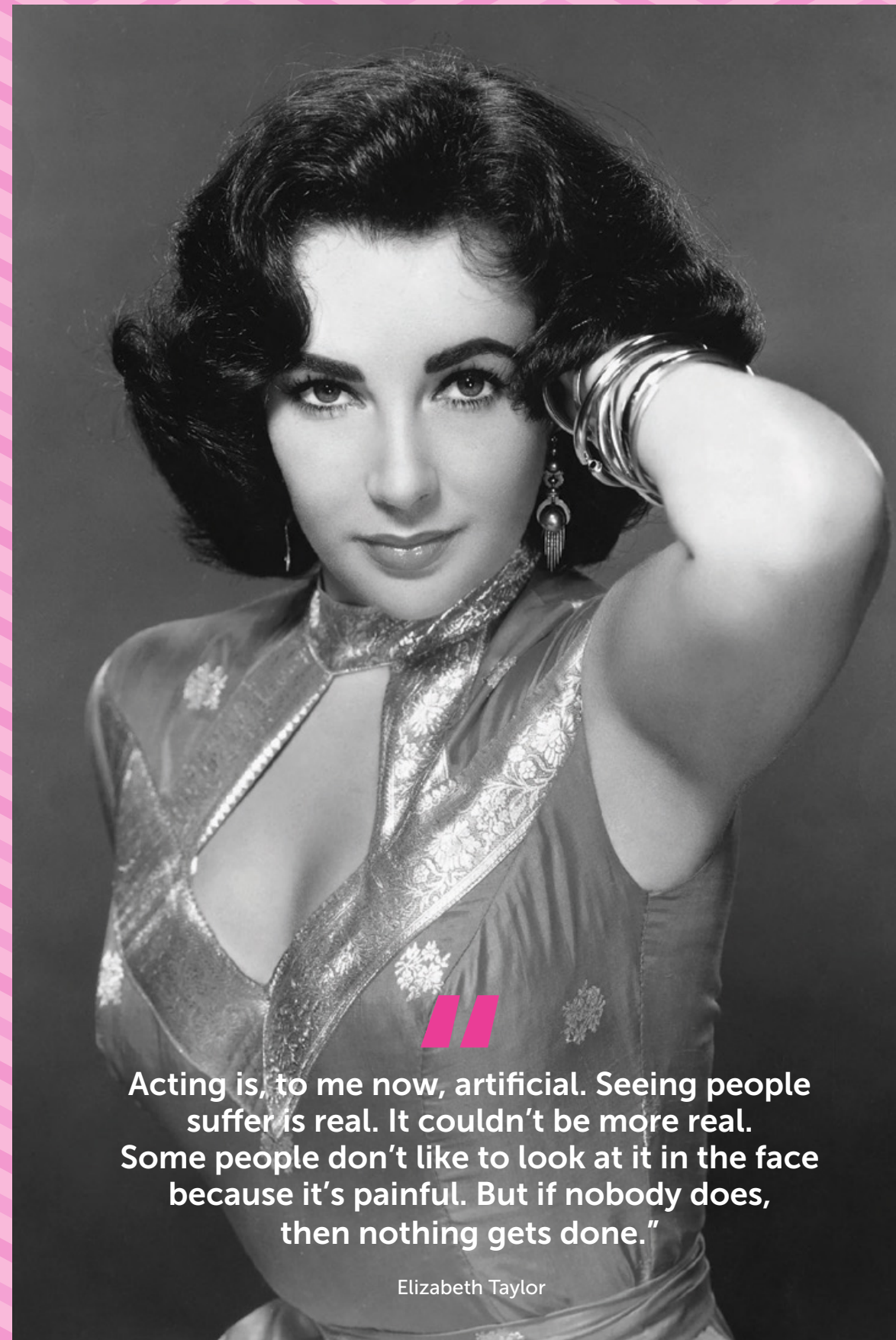


The trailblazing activist received the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 1993 for her outstanding charitable work (right). The unprecedented success of Taylor's fragrance White Diamonds (left), launched in 1991, popularized the celebrity perfume trend that would emerge in the decades that followed. As of 2024, it is estimated to have generated more than \$1.5 billion, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation.



Years later, away from the screen, the star would take on one of the most important roles of her life as a humanitarian activist in the fight against HIV/AIDS. After the death of her close friend, actor Rock Hudson, Taylor became one of the first celebrities to use her influence to raise awareness for the cause. She co-founded the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), which has raised millions for research and treatment, and later created the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation (ETAF), focused on prevention, treatment and support for people affected by the disease. In her lifetime, Taylor raised more than \$270 million for the cause.

In addition to her humanitarian commitment, the actress, who lived under constant media scrutiny, was a pioneer in the creation of celebrity fragrances. White Diamonds was her biggest success and one of the best-selling fragrances in history. Her passion for jewelry also led her to amass one of the most iconic collections. After her death, it was auctioned, and part of the proceeds went to amfAR. For her humanitarian work, she received numerous awards, establishing herself not only as a film legend but also as a committed and visionary activist. ★



Acting is, to me now, artificial. Seeing people suffer is real. It couldn't be more real. Some people don't like to look at it in the face because it's painful. But if nobody does, then nothing gets done."

Elizabeth Taylor

Cristóbal Balenciaga

MASTERS OF STYLE



C

Considered one of the great masters of haute couture, Spanish designer Cristóbal Balenciaga was celebrated for his exceptional craftsmanship and innovative designs that transformed women's fashion. His beautiful architectural silhouettes, such as the balloon skirt, cocoon coat and sack dress, served as the inspiration for several Barbie doll outfits in the 1950s.

Born in the Basque town of Getaria, Spain, Cristóbal Balenciaga founded his fashion house in San Sebastián in 1917. He later moved to Paris, where he reached the peak of his career in the 1940s and 1950s. Admired by renowned designers such as Christian Dior and Coco Chanel, Balenciaga was highly acclaimed for his technical

perfection, know-ledge of fabrics and sense of proportion. He transformed fashion with his structural approach and impeccable tailoring, paving the way for generations of designers who consider him an essential reference in the history of haute couture.

His clientele, which included high society and the entertainment world, was extensive, with names such as Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Grace Kelly, Ava Gardner, Audrey Hepburn and Jackie Kennedy. After closing his atelier in 1968, his legacy continued through disciples such as Hubert de Givenchy and Emanuel Ungaro. The Balenciaga brand re-emerged in the 1990s and remains a key influence in the fashion world today. ★



INNOVATIVE SILHOUETTES

Barbie's clothing designers drew inspiration from the fashion trends of the day. Referencing the creations of a designer like Balenciaga showed that they were up to date with the latest in avant-garde fashion. White cotton pique evening dress with a front cut and skirt featuring black silk ruffles, 1961 (above). Green evening gown with silk gazar cape, 1961 (right). Vintage wool boucle skirt suit from the 1950s (top right). Opposite page: Portrait of Balenciaga from 1927.



FASHIONABLE BARBIES

The *Ponytail Barbie* with the 1962 *Red Flare* outfit (left) features balloon sleeves and a trapeze-shaped silhouette that reflect Balenciaga's signature architectural style. Meanwhile, the *Bubble-Cut Barbie* with the 1963 *Career Girl* ensemble (right) evokes the designer's well-known style, defined by jacket-and-skirt suits with spread collars, Japanese sleeves and period hats.





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