

BARBIE RECONSIDERED

An alternative history of Barbie's wardrobe and lifestyle

小谷 直基 (経済学部 4年)

指導教員 : Roger Batty

With her more-than- perfect proportions and glamorous looks, Barbie has always been the center of attention. Yet thinking about more than her looks, Barbie was always both ahead of, and yet behind fashion trends; a perfect fashion icon, but a limited gender model.

In 1959, the first Barbie dolls went on display at the American Toy Fair in New York City. Since then Barbie has been the world's most loved fashion doll. The series sold more than a billion units and is still going strong.

The goal of this project is to examine the cultural tropes and gender stereotypes embedded in and embodied by the historical Barbie, and to highlight these by creating an alternative collection for Barbie. Making a one off collection for Barbie is one of the perfect ways to reveal how Barbie's rise to fame in an era dominated first by European Haute Couture and later by American casual wear has gradually turned into a steady decline, when faced by changing gender expectations and modern fashion trends based on a globalized world.

In written research, my aim is to show Barbie's cultural roots and limitations. Barbie always embodied only a certain ideal of womanhood, and this can be explored not just by references to class and gender, but also race and culture.