

From the Collection - Fabric Doll

by Coal Creek Curatorial Officer - 28 August 2008



I'm still a little girl at heart so for my first article I would like to share with you this gem from the Archive Room.

She is a handmade cloth doll; her body is made of yellow and blue patterned material and her face is painted on moulded fabric. The face does look like it may have been manufactured and then stitched into the body. She is wearing a lace headpiece and a sheer fabric dress with lace bodice; a cream satin ribbon is tied around her waist. Her measurements are 400mm x170mm x40mm.

The little doll was registered into the Coal Creek collection in 1984 however nothing about the donor or the doll's origins was known then. Perhaps one of the volunteers might be able to shed some light on her background. Have you seen the great cloths dolls on sale at reception? They are very similar to this doll except they have a lot more character.

Coal Creek cloth doll Reg No: 668

[More info on the history of cloth dolls gleaned from the internet](#)

The pattern or design of the early cloth doll was very primitive and crude, usually consisting of two identically shaped body pieces. The front and the back were exactly alike before hair, facial features, and clothing were applied. Today this simple type of doll is called a Pancake Doll which describes the flat construction. Sometimes, arms and legs were added to a head/body torso. This is still considered a "pancake doll" as it describes the head and face.

Clothing was made from fabric scraps left from sewing for the family. These early dolls might also have been dressed in leaves or other naturally found material. Most dolls were made for little girls, and resembled their owners. Boy dolls were rare.

http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/fabric_arts_and_cloth_dolls/100814

For centuries, rag dolls were made by mothers for their children. Rag dolls refer generically to dolls made of any fabric. Cloth dolls refer to a subset of rag dolls made of linen or cotton. Commercially produced rag dolls were first introduced in the 1850s by English and American manufacturers. Although not as sophisticated as dolls made from other materials, rag dolls were well-loved, often as a child's first toy.

<http://ctdollartists.com/history.htm>