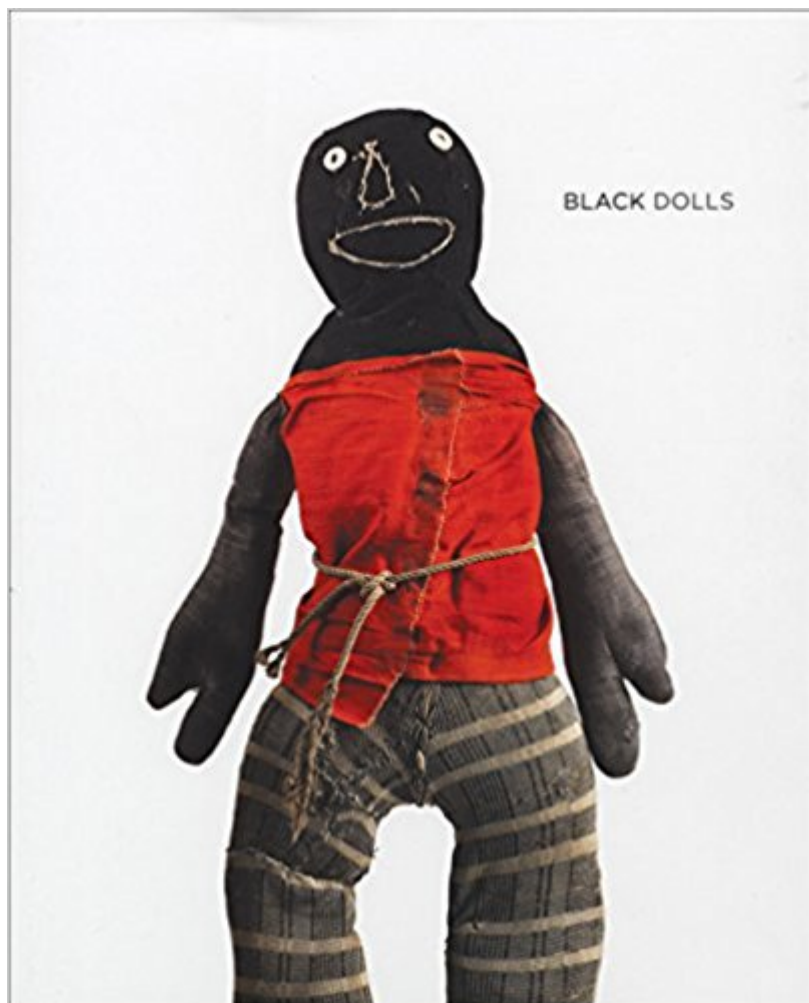




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Black Dolls: Unique African American Dolls, 1850-1930 From The Collection Of Deborah Neff



Synopsis

This book presents over 100 unique handmade African American dolls made between 1850 and 1930 from the collection of Deborah Neff, a Connecticut-based collector and champion of vernacular art. It is believed that African Americans created these dolls for the children in their lives, including members of their own families and respective communities as well as white children in their charge. Acquired over the last 25 years, this renowned collection is considered to be one of the finest of its kind ever to be assembled. The dolls portray faithful yet stylized representations of young and old African Americans—playful boys and girls, well-dressed gentlemen, elegant young ladies, and distinguished older men and women. Made with scraps of cloth, ribbon and lace, or old socks, and stuffed with wool or cotton, these unusual dolls are charming and full of emotional spirit. Their faces are embroidered, stitched and painted to express a variety of emotions, each representing a fascinating story of culture and identity in American history. The book also features an assortment of rare vintage photographs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, showing both black and white children holding, posing or playing with their dolls. After five years of combing the archives of museums, historical societies and private collections, the research done for this volume uncovered fascinating vernacular photographs of African American children holding white dolls and Caucasian children holding black dolls—but there was not a single image of an African American person holding a black doll. This complex combination of text and imagery has helped transform this book into a commentary about social mobility and racial identity conveyed through the untold story of these dolls. In an essay, renowned artist Faith Ringgold addresses the inherent prejudices of this work as well as her personal connection with the medium. Also included are essays by Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Margo Jefferson and writer Lyle Rexer.

Book Information

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& Home > Antiques & Collectibles > Dolls, Toys & Figurines > Dolls #650 in [Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > History](#) #3807 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering](#)

Customer Reviews

At The William Grant Still Arts Center in the West Adams neighborhood in Los Angeles, jazz superstars and comic book superheroes are gathered together in miniature, as part of the Black Doll Show. For the past 34 years, the center has held a doll show to showcase diverse dolls for children. The exhibit features dolls submitted by artists and collectors from around the country. This year's theme is A League Supreme: Jazz Superheroes. (The Staff NPR)

The book is a fantastic study of ethnic dolls for scholars and casual readers alike. It is lavishly illustrated with terrific detail. It will be a wonderful research tool for our museum.

Wonderful beautifully well done book. I was surprised that it was hard back and a pretty large book. Vintage antique Black cloth dolls are a passion of mine. Each are one of a kind and are a work of art and museum worthy. I also loved the old photos of Black and White children with their dolls . Which I also collect!

I bought the book on an instinct that it would be a great book and it is. The book is a big one, so the photographs of the dolls are beautiful, and abundant. I am an artist and I bought the book to have the images as inspiration and reference it's truly one of my favorite books now.

If you enjoy American folk art, cloth dolls, old photographs or American history, this book is for you. The pictures are fabulous and the essays are quite thoughtful. In addition to this, there is a section of the book that features rarely seen antique photographs of children & dolls. This has to be one of the finest American cloth doll collections in the country. A great book for your coffee table and library.

Saw this at MOMA and was completely wowed. These dolls were made by people who would have been artists if they had lived lives that allowed for it. The layout is beautiful and dramatic.

Amazing photos and history of this very important part of our culture...should never be forgotten!

Incredible dolls, workmanship and love!!

WONDERFUL BOOK.....beautifully illustrated and highly recommended for the vintage and primitive lover.

This is a beautifully photographed and compiled reference book! You will love it!

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