

Elizabeth Giron

Professor Corbally

English 102

09 November 2017

Museum Proposal

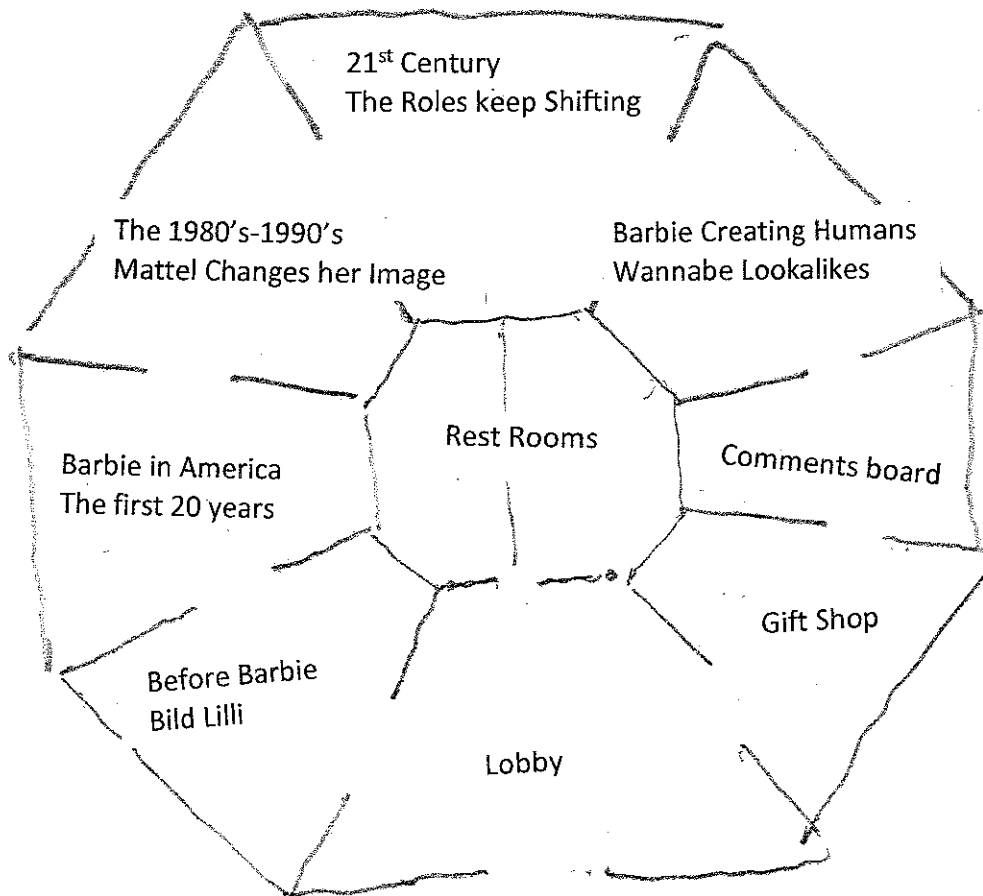
Few “things” that people have created are more iconic than Mattel’s Barbie doll.

Although many Toys’R’Us stores are now closing, the long pink aisle which was Barbie’s domain stirs up memories in many of us. And beyond being a simple fashion doll, Barbie has sparked all sorts of controversy over the years. As a consequence, Mattel has worked hard to shift Barbie’s image to meet the demands of new generations of consumers and collectors. The Barbie Image Museum will look at changes in the doll, in her accessories, in her growing family, and in her changing role since it first appeared in 1959.

Rooms/exhibits will not really be separated by decades but, instead, by key changes in Barbie’s image. A first room will actually focus on the roots of Barbie, how she was inspired by the German Bild Lilli doll and how Ruth Handler re-imagined and re-marketed the doll to make it a cornerstone of Mattel. Before the 1980’s Barbie was presented as a fashion model, really just a mini-mannequin to showcase stylish clothes and accessories (all sold separately). By the 1970’s feminists attacked the provocative proportions of the doll, and by the 1980’s Barbie became the young woman who could do any job and live independently. Still later, Mattel designed Barbie’s to reflect different demographics and, most recently, different body types.

That period in the 1980’s, where Mattel realized that they needed to re-think Barbie’s role in a major way (and why) will be the focus of my research paper (and will be a special exhibit in the museum itself.

A final interesting (and probably controversial) exhibit would show Barbie's influence on a small group of Barbie and Ken wannabe lookalikes, people like Valeria Lukyanova and Justin Jedlica. And near the exit a Thoughts About Barbie Post-it wall will allow visitors to put their views (positive or negative or just informative) about Barbie.



FLOOR PLAN

Works Cited

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