

Finding Aid to the Barbie Liberation Organization Collection, 1993-1994

Summary Information

Title: Barbie Liberation Organization collection

Creator: Barbie Liberation Organization (BLO)

ID: 94.86

Date: 1993-1994

Extent: 0.2 linear feet

Language: English

Abstract: The Barbie Liberation Organization collection is a compilation of flyers, instructions, and plans for the organization's notorious doll voice box-switching project.

Repository:

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

One Manhattan Square

Rochester, New York 14607

585.263.2700

library@museumofplay.org

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use: This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though the donors have not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, they have given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Custodial History: The Barbie Liberation Organization collection was donated to The Strong in January 1994 as a gift from The Barbie Liberation Organization. The collection was accessioned under Object ID 94.86.

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Processed by: Kelli Emler, August 2015

Controlled Access Terms

Corporate Names

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- BLO
- Hasbro, Inc.
- Mattel, Inc.

Subjects

- Barbie dolls
- Barbie Liberation Organization
- G.I. Joe figures
- Gender
- Guerillas as artists

Historical Note

The Barbie Liberation Organization (BLO) was an anonymous group of nonconformist artists who disapproved of the views conveyed to children by the popular toys Barbie and G.I. Joe. The BLO believed that Barbie and G.I. Joe brainwashed young children into believing in strict gender roles and that the pre-recorded phrases of talking doll variants were sexist. In an effort to “reverse the damage,” the BLO developed a subversive plan to bring attention to these perceived stereotypes.

In 1993, the group’s members purchased numerous Teen Talk Barbie dolls and G.I. Joe action figures from toy stores in order to switch their voice boxes via “surgery.” The BLO then returned the toys to the shelves of toy stores in time for the 1993 holiday season. As expected, parents who unknowingly purchased these altered dolls expressed surprise and outrage. Ultimately, the plan did bring mainstream media attention to the BLO mission. It is unknown how many dolls and action figures were affected by this movement.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The Barbie Liberation Organization collection is a small compilation of flyers, instructions, and planning documents. The collection also includes two VHS tapes about the BLO’s plan to switch voice boxes in G.I. Joe action figures and Teen Talk Barbie dolls.

The Barbie Liberation Organization collection has been arranged into two series. This collection is housed in one archival document box.

Related Materials

The Strong holds one of the altered Teen Talk Barbie dolls and an altered Electronic Battle Command Duke talking action figure in its museum collection.

System of Arrangement

Series I: Barbie Liberation Organization (BLO) planning materials, 1993-1994

Series II: VHS tapes, 1993

Contents List

Series I: Barbie Liberation Organization (BLO) planning materials, 1993-1994

Scope and Content Note: This series contains advertisements, planning materials, and instructions from the BLO. The planning materials detail which dolls or action figures to purchase; how to switch out the voice boxes; and how to return the altered products back to store shelves. There are also advertisements that help explain the BLO's intention and purpose.

Box 1

Folder 1 Barbie Liberation Organization (BLO) planning materials, instructions, and advertisements, July 1993- January 1994

Series II: VHS tapes, 1993

Scope and Content Note: This series houses two VHS tapes about the Barbie Liberation Organization (BLO). Tape one includes news footage about the BLO and their successful plan to switch G.I. Joe and Teen Talk Barbie voice boxes. Tape two was made by the BLO to explain their mission and purpose, as well as providing details about the voice box switch.

Box 1

Object 1 VHS Tape 1: "News Reels" [News segments about Teen Talk Barbie and G.I. Joe voice box switch, 20:51], 1993

Object 2 VHS Tape 2: "BLO" [BLO mission and instructions, 04:12], 1993