



museum of arts and design

**NEW YORK CITY'S MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN PRESENTS
*BARBIE®: A CULTURAL ICON***

Major Exhibition Explores Barbie's History and Impact on Fashion and Popular Culture
October 19, 2024–March 16, 2025



NEW YORK, NY (MAY 7, 2024)—This fall, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) presents *Barbie®: A Cultural Icon*, in collaboration with Illusion Projects and Mattel, Inc., a leading global toy and family entertainment company and owner of one of the most iconic brand portfolios in the world. The major exhibition first debuted in 2021, welcoming thousands of visitors in both Phoenix and Las Vegas. *Barbie®: A Cultural Icon* marks its exclusive East Coast engagement at MAD, celebrating the 65th Anniversary of Barbie.

On view from October 19–March 16, 2025, the exhibition charts the 65-year history of Barbie and the doll's global impact on fashion and popular culture through an expansive display of more than 250 vintage dolls, life-size fashion designs, advertisements and other ephemera, exclusive video interviews with the doll's designers, and narrative sections that highlight the style trends, careers, and identities that Barbie has embodied and popularized over the decades.

“We are tickled ‘pink’ to welcome Barbie to the MAD this fall,” said Tim Rodgers, Nanette L. Laitman Director, Museum of Arts and Design. “The Museum has long been interested in the cultural impact of art and design in all spheres, including pop culture. More than simply a toy for make-believe and role play, Barbie has responded to and reflected nearly every significant social advancement over the last six decades.”

Inspired by the brand’s influence on culture, visitors to the exhibition will trace Barbie’s evolution from a child’s toy to a global icon across six distinct sections. The opening section relays the Barbie origin story and presents all 22 original ensemble outfits, while subsequent areas consider the influence of the Space Age; the creation of Christie, the first Black doll; the arrival of Ken; and the creation of the Barbie Dreamhouse™.

Visitors will also see Barbie in the iconic fashions of the 1970s, including Groovy Style, beachwear, and disco-themed designs, while sections on the 1980s and 1990s present a selection of diverse Barbie dolls representing a range of ethnicities, body types, and careers, including a feature on the first Black Barbie. The exhibition culminates in the 2000s, spotlighting the continued diversification of characters within the Barbie universe and connecting them to contemporary fashion trends, perspectives, and identities.

The exhibition, curated by Karan Feder and drawn from the private collection of David Porcello and Mattel, also features more than 50 historical objects and five unique photo opportunities, including a life-size Barbie Mirror-Pink Corvette with which visitors can interact. The exhibit will also showcase the Barbie Signature 65th Blue Sapphire Anniversary Fashion Dolls, paying homage to the iconic history and legacy of Barbie.

“We’re delighted to announce the opening of *Barbie: A Cultural Icon* at Museum of Arts and Design as we celebrate the 65th Anniversary of Barbie,” said Julie Freeland, Vice President of Global Location Based Entertainment, Mattel. “Barbie is a brand that has evolved through generations, and we can’t wait for fans of all ages to take a journey through time with us in New York City.”

The exhibition at MAD will be augmented with related special events, a series of public programs, and a selection of official merchandise on sale at The Store at MAD. For updates and information, visit madmuseum.org and subscribe to the Museum’s monthly newsletter.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

Barbie®: A Cultural Icon

Curated and Toured by Illusion Projects Inc. and curated by Karan Feder, in partnership with Mattel Inc.

Karan Feder – Curator

Shelley Lynn M.A – Director

Tim Clothier – Producer

David Porcello – Consultant

Suzanne Becker PhD – Education Consultant

Trevor Bluth – Project Manager

ABOUT ILLUSION PROJECTS INC.

Illusion Projects is a creative design and production company. Working with industry leaders such as Meow Wolf, Spiegelworld, Caesars Entertainment, and Cirque du Soleil; they specialize in the production, design and fabrication of exciting experiences and theatrical entertainment. As a creative company, they believe in pulling together intrigue, spectacle, education, and fascination; to deliver lasting memories and amazing adventures.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit madmuseum.org.

ABOUT MATTEL

Mattel is a leading global toy and family entertainment company and owner of one of the most iconic brand portfolios in the world. We engage consumers and fans through our franchise brands, including Barbie®, Hot Wheels®, Fisher-Price®, American Girl®, Thomas & Friends™, UNO®, Masters of the Universe®, Matchbox®, Monster High®, MEGA® and Polly Pocket®, as well as other popular properties that we own or license in partnership with global entertainment companies. Our offerings include toys, content, consumer products, digital and live experiences. Our products are sold in collaboration with the world's leading retail and ecommerce companies. Since its founding in 1945, Mattel is proud to be a trusted partner in empowering generations to explore the wonder of childhood and reach their full potential. Visit us at mattel.com.

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