

Auction Gallery A Mystery Solved! The Stein am Rhein



The brown-eyed Albert Marque doll, known to collectors as "the lost #27 boy" (as the doll is #27 from the series of only 100 examples made), is wearing his entirely original costume with Margaine-Lacroix label intact.



Gorgeous, yet demure, is the prized bebe of French dollmaker Halopeau, known as the "H" bebe.



The only doll ever designed by French artist, Francisque Poulbot, was the street urchin, made famous in his poster illustration work. The dolls were offered as pair, Nenette and Rintintin, in Paris department store catalogs in 1914, this then marking their 100th year anniversary! A pair are offered, in entirely original unplayed with condition, from the Stein am Rhein doll museum.



Among the treasures of the Stein am Rhein Museum are two exquisite A.T. babes, a stunning and rare Petit et Dumoutier, and a pair of extremely rare bisque Steiner dolls in original military costumes.

Two rare googly-eyed dolls peer wide-eyed at the all-original Rouillet et Decamps automaton featuring four small bisque dolls riding the elephant who marches along and heaves his trunk from side to side. Many other googlies and automata are featured in the auction.



Nearly fifteen years ago, in the small Swiss village of Stein am Rhein, Frau Steiner turned out the lights, closed and bolted the doors, and locked the window shutters of her beloved doll museum that had stood for years on a small cobblestone pedestrian street in this quaint locale. She would never open again.

For the next fifteen years, mystery surrounded this museum, for when Frau Steiner took down her signs she also vanished from the doll world. For years people talked about it, wondered what happened, speculated that the dolls were now in storage, or had been sold intact to one collector in a faraway part of the world. There was even an old website that documented all of the known Albert Marque dolls across the world that listed "the lost #27 that was part of the Stein am Rhein Puppenmuseum of past" and asked collectors to "please help us find out whatever happened to this doll and to the museum."

Tales ran amok. But, in fact, the dolls had quietly sat there, tended each week, year after year, by a neighboring caretaker and family members, and visited only by Frau Steiner herself, who, in truth, could not bear to part with her museum although she was no longer able to welcome others.

In time, the tales stopped and memories faded.

Then, one day, several years ago, the Steiner family contacted Theriault's and told them that, in fact, the dolls still sat in the very same location and had not been touched in all this time. Everything was as it was when the doors closed. They were just starting to consider the possibility that the dolls should be auctioned. At the time, Frau Steiner was alive but having difficulty checking on the museum each week. However, knowing that the dolls were there was enough for her and everyone decided to let it be for now so that she could still enjoy the thought that her beloved museum still stood as it was.

Stuart Holbrook recalls that first meeting, "I will never forget the doors opening the first time I visited. Large wood gates creaked and squealed on that foggy and damp March afternoon. I peered into the darkened room as the family found the light switch. The first thing I saw was a sign publishing the entrance fee, proving just how long the museum had been closed. It

Doll Museum of Switzerland Comes to Auction March 29-30

gave the amount in Swiss Francs - but next to it also offered the alternative of "5 Deutsch Marks." I could barely recall what a Deutsch mark even looked like".

"Though I had heard whispers over the years of the fabulous dolls that Frau Steiner had collected, the reality was even better. Two floors were completely full of classic and splendidly rare French and German dolls and unusual accessories and playthings. The museum stood as a time capsule of perfection...one of the best I had ever seen in Europe. This was a perfectly assembled cross-section of everything collectors have come to love today in the world of fine and rare antique dolls." And there at the entrance stood the all-original A. Marque doll, the so-called "lost #27", its costume being bearing the desirable Margaine-Lacroix label.

Holbrook continued, "After a few moments the cases were lit and the bounty was further unveiled to me, the first outsider in years to witness what was here. Bebes by Thuillier, Halopeau, Bru, Jumeau, Steiner, Schmitt, Petit et Dumoutier, and others. Poupées large and small, automatons and rare German characters...an endless vault of nearly 1000 pieces that stood exactly as they were on that day 15 years when the museum closed."

Now the moment has arrived. After Frau Steiner's passing last year, Theriault's was contacted again. The family felt that now was the time. The museum must go back into the hands of collectors and the mystery unveiled. And so it will be.

On March 29th and 30th, 2014 the auction will take place in Naples, Florida at the beautiful Waldorf Astoria Beach Resort. The weekend events begin on Friday, March 28 with a free one-day Dollmastery seminar presented by Florence Theriault, in which dolls from the Museum will be examined in depth with hands-on study (the seminar is free, but attendance is limited to 25 people so call early to reserve a place. Then, two full days of auctions on Saturday and Sunday will offer these cherished dolls to today's collectors. A hard-bound commemorative catalog will give many a first-time look at the vision of Frau Steiner and what had been the Puppenmuseum Stein am Rhein. (See the fold-out piece on the inside cover of this magazine for a grand view of some of the dolls). All of the dolls can be viewed online after March 10, 2014. For more information about the auction or to order a catalog call 800-638-0422 or 410-224-3655, or email info@theriaults.com.



French poupées in the collection include examples from Huret, Rohmer, Bru, Jumeau and others in classic 17" size, as seen in these two fine examples. The museum also has a notable collection of extremely rare larger poupées (see photo on inside fold-out cover of this magazine).



Very rare French poupée with expressive features and original signed Rohmer body.



German bisque dolls include this trio in wonderful factory-original costumes or chemise.



Several dolls with trousseaux are featured in the auction, including this Bleuette with trunk and wardrobe of original costumes.



Some of the miniature doll-sized furniture treasures from the Stein am Rhein collection.

More **Auction Gallery** on page 60

The Complete Guide to Antique,
Vintage and Collectible Dolls

Antique DOLL COLLECTOR®

March 2014
Vol. 17, No. 2
\$5⁹⁵ / \$6⁹⁵ Canada
www.antiquedollcollector.com

Enigmas... Motchmanns...

Täuflinge

The Joys of
Cross-Collecting

Attic Treasures

Celluloid
Peter & Marie

Entering Your
Dolls in
Competition

Lettie Lane
and Friends

