



A rare pair of dancing puff dolls. Value approx. £1,350. (Lorraine Shepherd Collection).



Mata Hari-inspired powder puff half-doll with separate legs. Value: approx. £850. (Lee Milne Collection.)

## Boudoir Beauties

by Brenda Greysmith



It is believed the Pierrot once supported a shallow puff dish. Base marked Dressel, Kister & Co. Value: approx. £650. (John & Judith Fowell Collection.)



A powder box doll with puff and mirror, marked 'Carlton Ware, W&R, Stoke-on-Trent, Swallow'. Value: approx. £150. (Private Collection.)

As cosmetics became more widely used in the early twentieth century, fashionable ladies' dressing tables were often graced by porcelain figurines that served as face-powder accessories and took many forms. Some were made as a one-piece item that simply provided a place to keep a prettily tinted swansdown powder puff. Others were sold as a two-piece set with a decorative powder-puff handle and dish designed to go together. There were also three-piece ensembles that incorporated a container for the powder. Many designs show the influence of Art Deco style and have charm and vitality. They might depict women looking in mirrors or applying cosmetics. Others were inspired by a romantic theme such as Pierrots and Pierrettes. There were more exotic characters too, such as the dancers of the Folies Bergere, the courtesan and reputed spy Mata Hari, and the entertainer Josephine Baker.

There was considerable variation in the form that these dressing-table items might take. Some puff dishes were simply legs with the puff as a skirt, and the body and head as a handle. In other cases, the configuration was reversed with the legs as the puff handle and the dish taking the form of the body. (perhaps lying down but resting on the elbows) There was also a rather different type, where the top half of a doll figure had a skirt with capacious pockets that held the powder puffs. It is this form which gives a clue to the background to these figurative powder accessories. A huge range of 'half-doll' figures were made at the beginning of the twentieth century and became popular for many different purposes, from pincushion holders to tea-cosy tops. This offers interesting scope for the less well-heeled collector. While powder-puff figures can be relatively expensive, designs made for uses outside the boudoir can be more affordable and it is still possible to find examples via antique fairs, large fleamarkets and the internet, as well as from speciality doll dealers. Despite growing interest, half-doll figures can be bought for less than £5, although prices can reach £2,500 for particularly sought-after examples.

The half-doll itself is thought to have originated in Germany in the early 1900s and a great many were manufactured between the two World Wars. In the 1930s and '40s, many UK and US

households threw them away because German products were considered unpatriotic. Innumerable designs were produced, including the most familiar head-to-waist porcelain dolls, but there are also heads, busts and full figures. Design sources range from great paintings to comic strips, and from fashion to mythology and religion, but many depict ladies in an old-fashioned costume which could be completed with a fabric or knitted crinoline skirt. In many cases, the customer would create the skirt that supported the head and half torso supplied by the manufacturer and the skilled amateur needlewoman could produce some fine examples. Other half-dolls and many of the powder accessory figures, were sold complete in themselves and never intended for home-made additions.

It was not always the customer who dressed the half-doll. Some were costumed by the factories themselves or by speciality shops. The manufacturer Dressel, Kister & Co. for example, was responsible for very fine costuming of dolls as lamps, cosies and cabinet pieces and French speciality shops transformed mass-produced half-dolls into objets d'art. Some collectors remove extra trappings and this may have no impact on value, but it is worth retaining wire frames, containers of all types and powder puffs that are still presentable. It would be ill-advised to disassemble a half-doll which had been skilfully and stylishly costumed.

Whether made as a powder accessory or other type of half-doll, the most desirable examples are generally the exotic, intricate and large examples. Those made from multiple moulds with arms away from the body and decorated with individually applied niceties are more sought after than those from simple two-piece moulds. The ones which stand out from the crowd have been decorated with much attention and detailed painting. However, as with most collectables, condition is a major factor in valuation. Badly repaired items are worth no more than if they were still broken and even professionally restored dolls are worth less than pristine examples. It is best to go for quality and perfect condition dolls, although rare items are acceptable with slight damage. Attribution can be difficult, as many half-dolls and powder accessory

figures do not have trademarks. However, it is known that German producers always dominated the market; names which enhance value of powder accessories include Sitzendorfer Porzellanfabrik, Carl Schneider and Dressel, Kister & Co, while Schafer & Vater are known for their highly original figural scent bottles. Moving away from the boudoir, Galluba & Hofmann made some fine Edwardian-style lady half-dolls which were sold with outer garments and Lilli Baitz created strikingly theatrical looking examples. There are also interesting powder accessories from un-named French makers. English producers never quite managed the flair of their European contemporaries but half-doll figures were made by such companies as Wade, Worcester Royal Porcelain Co, Crown Staffordshire Porcelain and Potter & Moore.



An outstanding powder puff and dish assembly. Value: approx. £450. (Lorraine Shepherd Collection.)



This powder dish has a sticker which reads 'A Present from Southport'. It supports a powder-puff head and shoulders. Value: approx. £225. (Pearl Lovell Collection.)

**The Half-Doll: with related items, makers and values, Volume I**, Shona and Marc Lorrin, published by the authors. Library Congress number 99-094025. Produced in a limited edition of 2,000 numbered copies, the book costs \$64.95 plus postage. For shipping costs contact the authors Tel: +1 918 835 8624. Email: Juniper64@halfdolls.com. Volume II (printed in 2002) is sold out; Volume III will be published early in 2004. All illustrations and values are from **The Half-Doll: Volume I**, by Shona and Marc Lorrin.



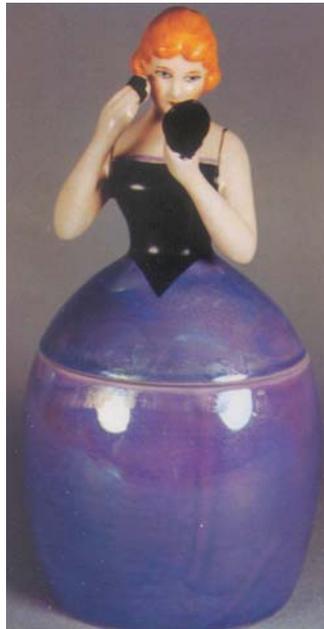
The ever popular Pierrot and Pierrette. Value: approx. £450. (Lorraine Shepherd Collection.)



One of many powder-puff ensembles where torso formed the dish. Value: approx. £225. (Carl & Vicki Lee Little Collection.)



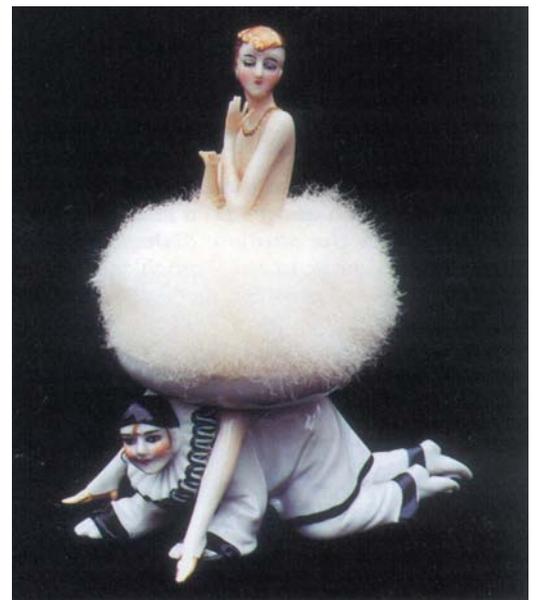
A remarkable puff dish made by Sitzendorfer Porzellanfabrik. Value: approx £750. (Lorraine Shepherd Collection.)



The clown-type figure on the left supports a cardboard powder box of French origin, while the one on the right has a puff dish. Value: approx. £450. (Left: Melody Kriteaman Collection; Right: Shona Lorrin Collection.)



A powder-puff doll where the lady's pockets hold velour powder puffs of various colours. Value: approx. £150. (Mildred Detrick Collection.)



Pierrots were popular subjects for puff dishes. In this model, the powder puff half-doll sits astride him. Value: approx. £850. (Mildred Detrick Collection.)