

# MOMOKO



# Laca



ARTICLE + DESIGN + PHOTOGRAPHY = J. DAVID BUTTRY

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My first glimpse of Momoko occurred in 2001 while visiting my favorite online *Jenny* doll group...*Biscuit's Club*. *Biscuit's* was run by Helene Vrot, a French woman living in Japan who has a love of Japanese fashion dolls. She had the inside track to this new doll being released by **Petworks**.

Helene had posted a prototype picture of the Dollhead Exhibition dolls, otherwise known as DHEXl (long) and DHEXs (short). If you collect Momoko you have to get used to all the abbreviations and numbers, or do what I do and just make up my own names for them. Anyway, I saw the dolls and wanted them. I would spend the next few weeks in anticipation of their release only to find out the editions would be incredibly limited (125 pieces per doll) and only sold in Japan at the Dollhead Exhibition.

I pretty much gave up the idea of ever having one of the dolls. My last hope was contacting a doll dealer friend, and requesting that if they came across one, would they please get it for me. A few days later while surfing eBay, as I frequently do to kill time (and my wallet), I came across the longhaired version up for auction. I knew I had to have her and I was willing to go the distance financially to get her. I was sure there would be lots of bidders, but there wasn't. In fact there was only one other bidder and I ended up winning the auction for a little over the exhibition price. WOOHOO! I was a happy camper. Several days after that, my dealer friend called me and said that they had managed to get a few of the dolls and did I still want one. Ummm...YES! I was so excited. Soon I would be in possession of the two dolls I had coveted since that day at Biscuits. Within a couple of weeks both dolls arrived. I was the proud owner of both DHEXl and DHEXs. These dolls would become the Holy Grail for future Momoko collectors and, they became the pride and joy of my collection.

Never had I loved a doll so much. She reminded me of another doll I fancied, **Mattel's** vintage *Francie*. Like *Francie*, in her time, Momoko represents a girl who has a love of modern style and fashion. Momoko's creator, Namie Manabe, definitely knew what she was doing. And her admiration for *Francie* and vintage *Licca* were noticeable. The adorable, original head sculpt was created by the talented Keisuke Sawada. The doll has elfin delicate features and the cutest protruding ears since *First Generation Licca*.. She was gorgeous and I was hooked big time.

One of the best things about Momoko is her ability to look adorable in just about everything you put on her. She is one of the best dolls to redress. She is about the same size as vintage *Francie*, *Teen Skipper* and *Jenny*, so she can wear just about all of their clothing. I've dressed her in formal wear, vintage wear, mod and con-

temporary street fashions. And, she looks great in all of it. A truly versatile doll! You can see some of the pieces I chose to dress my dolls in, in the pictures that accompany this article. There is no end to the possibilities.

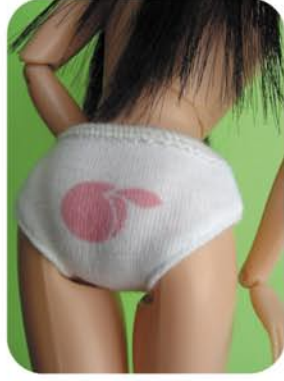
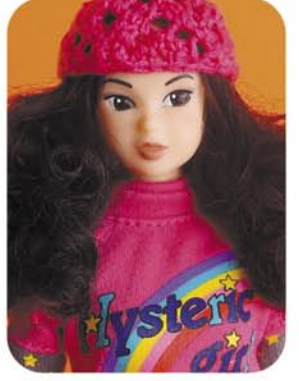
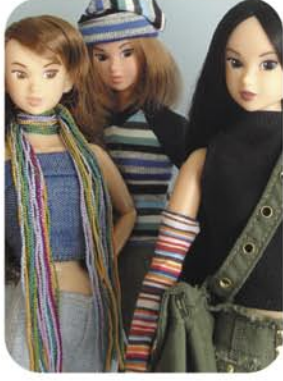
Back online, Helene posted that she was going to be able to offer a new Momoko to the group. Everyone was excited and we were all shown SF22 a few weeks later; a dark tanned Momoko with long brown hair and bangs. Another offer from the group was the third release known as O1AT or commonly referred to as Wolfcut Momoko. As her hair is cut in a contemporary shaggy, layered hair style reminding one of hair on a wolf, Wolfcut is also a highly sought after version of Momoko. And it might be of interest to some of you that we were able to purchase two of the dolls, if we liked. I liked and didn't hesitate to take Helene up on this offer, choosing to get two of these special dolls.

Soon after this, Helene posted to the group something incredibly exciting. We were going to be able to design a limited edition club doll! As a group we got to choose hair color, hair length and style. It was a lot of fun and we decided on a short flipped hairstyle for our group Momoko. Now we just had to wait for her to be made, which was going to take a bit of time.

At this point there were a lot of posts regarding Momoko at *Biscuit's* and it was starting to take away from *Jenny* and *Licca*. My interest in those dolls was pushed to the side as my love for Momoko grew. I decided that it would be nice to start a Momoko group but didn't want to upset Helene. I emailed her and asked if it would be okay if I started a separate group just for Momoko. Helene was in full support of the idea.

I wasn't sure if I would be able to handle it on my own so I emailed my friend and fellow Momoko enthusiast, Sherri Rhein, and asked if she would be interested in co-moderating the group with me. She agreed and **GoGo Momoko** was born. Helene even had a direct link off the homepage of *Biscuits* for the group and the memberships grew very quickly. There is no doubt that Momoko owes a great deal of her success in the west to Helene Vrot. She is a part of Momoko's history that I feel needs to be recognized.

Helene had decided that the dolls were getting a bit difficult to maintain as she and her husband were getting the dolls from *Petwork* and then, distributing them to the club members who had ordered them. It was a big chore and a lot for Helene to do as she had recently become a new mom. Rudi Teruel of **R&D Fashion Dolls**, stepped in, worked out a deal. From that time on, it was agreed that R&D would be the sole distributor of Momoko outside of Japan. This was a lot more convenient for club members



SF22 & Mamemomoko photos courtesy of Michelle Blankenship

# Shoes!



and, Helene. As everyone loves Rudi, it was a win/win situation for everyone.

By the time of the club doll's release in 2002, GoGo was established so the doll became known as the *GoGo Momoko* club doll or officially known as "02CM". Are you catching on to the abbreviations yet? It gets even better. She ended up looking a tad different from what we had hoped. She was originally supposed to have floppy, feathery hair with bangs. The final result was more like a turned under bobbed hairdo, but she was still really cute even with her unruly hair. Mine usually sports a hat of some sort to keep her bangs in place. Her face is one of the prettiest, next to the original DHEX dolls. At least I think so, but I'm a bit biased.

The next thing that happened in the world of Momoko, in 2002, just about gave us a heart attack. Five dolls were released at once! A bit cruel for Momoko collectors as Momoko wasn't a cheap doll at this time. And, the prices had gone up with these newly released dolls.

Up until this point, the dolls came wearing undies and packaged in plastic Baggies and averaged about \$80. Now they were going to be fully dressed and come in a box. All of this contributed to a price rise, to about \$135. What made things worse is that all five dolls were adorable and completely different from one another, so, of course, who wouldn't want all of them? I know I did. The favorite of this group with most collectors was *Daisy D Momoko*. She was slightly gothic looking with simple eye makeup, pale lips long dark hair and a rockin' outfit with the infamous Doc Martenesque combat boots.

In Japan there are custom doll clothing groups that have funky names and create wonderful trendy clothing. *Daisy D* is one of these groups along with *Kosuru Factory* and *Cool Dolls*. Each of these three were represented in this new group of five dolls. To round out this cast was "02PL" (Peach Lady) a lovely doll who came with a larger bust, pink eyes and a pink bubble hairdo. Just think of *Frenchie* in "Grease" with bigger...well ya know. She's a cute doll and probably the most vintage looking of all the released dolls, so far. Last but not least, "02SM", a cute redheaded Wolfcut doll.

Back at GoGo, the group was getting larger as Momoko's popularity increased with collectors. In response Rudi, myself and another friend worked on creating an exclusive outfit for GoGo. It was a super cute outfit with a trendy t-shirt featuring my GGM illustration, matching tote bag, tan shorts, vinyl belt and killer white boots that had matching light blue trim. It was a lot of fun witnessing the creative process behind this outfit and then, finally, seeing the finished product. Petworks also introduced their own line of clothing for Momoko called Momokomono; cute separates and outfits created for our favorite girl. Pricey, but the quality is amazing. And let's talk about Momoko's shoes for a second. They are perhaps the best 1:6 scale doll shoes ever produced. Remarkably detailed with realistic styles and colors.

It's now 2003 and there is a new Momoko exhibition entitled "Doll in East". It introduces three new dolls wearing Asian influenced ensembles. There's a light blonde "03SSbl", a buxom tanned redhead "03SSor", and R&D's first exclusive, "03RD", a gorgeous, longhaired, raven Momoko. All three girls have beautiful screen-



Momoko in Kimono. Momoko is versatile enough to wear street clothes, high fashion, and traditional garb, yet always look fresh and modern.

ings. The blond has such high color that she reminds me of a gorgeous vintage Twist and Turn Barbie. To finish out Momoko's third year anniversary there are two new dolls, "03AN" and "03ANsp"; the latter being a special limited edition and the former a pixie haired cutie. Each of these dolls sported a Momoko first...forward gazing eyes. Momoko always had side glancing eyes. This new variation gave the doll a really different look and some collectors liked it while others didn't. I was on the fence about it myself. Part of Momoko's charm was in her side-glance eyes. With the forward gaze she seemed more knowing and less innocent. Eventually, I got over it, as did a lot of other collectors.

There were shades of 2002 in the sheer amount of dolls released in 2004. We had "04NY", "04SScc", "04SShl", "04Smt" and "04SSbc", to choose from. These dolls were a mixture of different looks and styles and were all sought after, even though some of them were harder to get than others. Some were more limited and more expensive. You had to decide beforehand which ones you were wanted to get. I ended up getting 04SScc, a very cute doll with light brown, long pigtailed and 04SShl, which has beautiful lemon yellow hair. I really longed for 04SScc, as she had long, golden blonde hair. But I couldn't get everything I wanted, so I settled for the other two.

Between 2002 and 2004, Momoko's price had jumped from \$135 to \$180, and beyond for the special exclusive dolls not mentioned in this article, making it hard for collectors to be completists. And I was certainly no exception. As the moderator of the group I wish I had the money to get every Momoko doll. But that's just not a reality for me so I had to decide early on which dolls I could get and which ones that I could live without. I also had to accept the fact there were going to be dolls that I wanted but was not going to get for whatever reason; either prohibitive prices or the limited editions. Also, some of the dolls were only offered at stores in Japan so you either had to have connections or a buying service to get the dolls for you either at the stores, events or Yahoo Japan auctions.

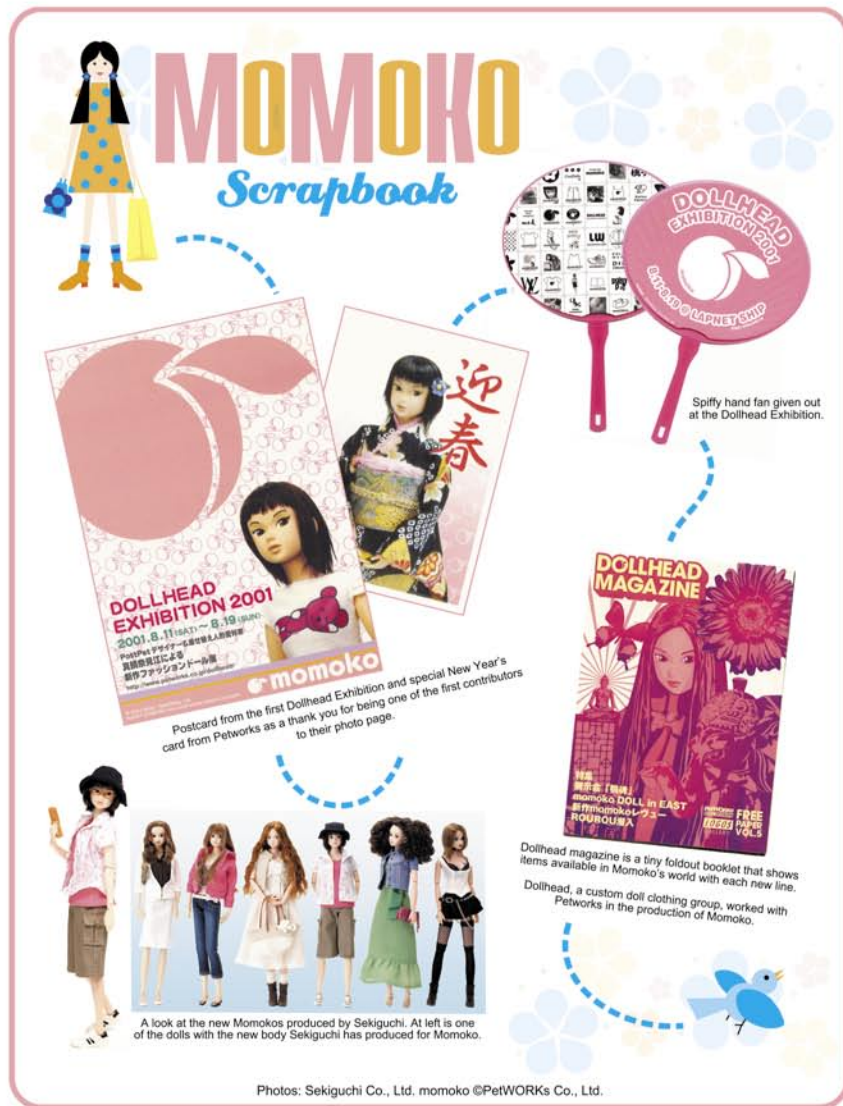
In 2004 there was announcement that after the next batch of dolls, Momoko would be put on hiatus while Petworks put their focus on their new Mamemomoko line. This is a, little, child version of the Momoko doll. Similar in size to a *Kelly* doll these dolls have as much street style as their adult counterparts. They are manufactured by Sekiguchi, who is known to most as the makers of *Monchichis*. These dolls are definitely cute but my main love is for adult fashion dolls so I personally decided to pass on collecting these cuties. But I admire the ones in my friends' collections. Especially the smaller versions of the original Momoko dolls they released in Mamemomoko size. They were hard to resist, let me tell ya.

The last dolls announced were in celebration of Momoko's fourth anniversary; versions "04AN" and "04ANlw". Once again limited, but two adorable dolls going back to Momoko's roots and her love

of street fashion. A proper ending for an amazing doll! I was feeling sad as I figured this would be the end of my favorite doll. I would have to look for another doll that could take her place. Who wouldn't be sad if they found out the doll they had put so much love and effort into was soon to be gone? She had been my muse, my fashion model and my comfort. When others left and got into

*Blythe* and *Super Dollfie*s I stayed with my girl. She meant a lot to me.

In 2005 we were informed that Momoko would indeed live on. She will now be manufactured by Sekiguchi. And, because of mass manufacturing, her prices have dropped drastically, down to \$80. She will also be more widely available and more dealers will be carrying her; making way for a whole new crop of Momoko collectors who couldn't afford the Petworks version. So far, there are 9 new dolls scheduled to be released over the spring and summer; each with their own look, style and attitude. Oh! And before I forget...a new body. The Momokos produced by Petworks shared Takara's *Super Action Jenny* (SAJ) jointed body but now Sekiguchi has created a brand new body specifically for Momoko and it's lovely; great articulation and a pretty hand sculpt.



GoGo Momoko is still going strong with over 750 members and it continues to grow as interest in the new dolls increases. We now have, with the addition of my friend Mary Ewing, three moderators. Mary has been an enormous help, especially as we are all anticipating and prepared for a new dawn for Momoko. And you know, while looking at the new dolls online, I got that same feeling I had when I first spotted Momoko almost five years ago at *Biscuit's Club*. I'm still loco for that doll! ❖





For more information on Momoko, check out these sites on the web:

<http://www.momokodoll.com/>  
The official Sekiguchi Momoko site

<http://www.petworks.co.jp/doll/>  
The original Petworks Momoko site



[http://www.geocities.com/lisa\\_l\\_miller/momoko.htm](http://www.geocities.com/lisa_l_miller/momoko.htm)  
Be sure to check out Lisa's amazing Momoko paperdolls.

<http://yuupin.cool.ne.jp/momoco.htm>  
Yuupin's amazing Momoko site.



<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gogomomoko/>  
The original Momoko yahoo group created by Moi.

