

# The Legendary Doll Collection of Estelle Johnston at Auction

The title of this auction of her dolls, borrowed from the title of an article which she herself had written for *Doll Reader* in 1986, perfectly expresses her love of lady dolls. When Theriault's auctioned Part I of her collection in 2013, few people knew that Estelle had preserved many of her favorite dolls to accompany her on the move from her grand Atlanta manse to a cottage overlooking the Pacific Ocean. But, oh the dolls she kept! Extraordinary lady dolls from the 18th century—Grodnerl woodens, French carton moule, English woodens, Italian court dolls—from rare grand sizes to those so petite that they were surely made for early doll houses. For Estelle it was the construction, body, and costume of the doll that was of equal importance to the face, and she made a decades-long study in fashion, textiles, needlework and costume, all of which are splendidly reflected in her collection. Her passion for lady dolls extended to the exquisite bisque poupées of mid-century 19th century France, and includes fine examples by Huret and Rohmer, among others. As well, rare lady dolls of porcelain kept her companion including examples by KPM and Schlaggenwald.

Collectors of beautiful French *bébés* will also find great treasures including choice dolls from Thuillier, Bru, Jumeau, Steiner and Schmitt, each exquisitely costumed. Her interest in the child doll with articulated body had first been awakened by learning of the Japanese ichimatsu articulated play doll introduced to the Western society at the 1851 London World Fair, then began her on a quest for the early German and French taufing babies that had been inspired by this event, and eventually brought her, full circle, back to the Japanese play dolls themselves—all of which are represented in this auction.

The tiniest doll ephemera attracted Estelle, and her collection is replete with outstanding accessories including fans, parasols, jewelry, gloves, purses, toilettries, necessaires—right down to an incredibly rare 2" porcelain bourdaloue. Other delights include doll furniture, miniature paintings, fabulous sewing boxes with luxury contents, boxed tea services and toiletry sets, early fashion books and engravings, 18th century textiles, an early 17th century stumpwork embroidery panel, and very fine real people costumes including an extraordinary silk gown, circa 1875, from the House of Worth.

Every collection finds itself in the possession of a rarity that seems incongruous. In the Estelle Johnston collection, it is her pair of American cloth dolls by Roxanna Cole. Incongruous, of course, only until one realizes that the dolls were gifts from Roxanne Cole herself to the young girls, Sally and Laura Harton, who grew up to become the mother-in-law and aunt-in-law of, who else, but Estelle Johnston to whom they were bequeathed. The dolls, together their entire life, will be sold as a pair along with other important documents and memorabilia from the Cole family, including a full-size silk embroidered quilt also made by Roxanna Cole.

There are over 450 lots in this important auction. Saturday, October 1, will present 300 cataloged lots, to be followed by an additional 150 cataloged lots on Sunday, October 2. Bidding is available by absentee or live telephone or internet bidding at the time of the auction. The Sunday catalog session will be followed by another 150 lots of Discovery Day dolls.

All of the treasures of the Estelle Johnston collection are presented in a 200+ page catalog with full color photos of each lot along with complete descriptions, many with references to articles in which the collector wrote of her dolls. ✦

Questions? Just call Theriault's at 800-638-0422 or email [info@theriaults.com](mailto:info@theriaults.com) and we'll review all the details and help you choose the best bidding option for you.



**"For the Love of the Ladies"**  
A full color art quality collector's book for the October 1-2 auction is available for \$59 domestic with after-sale price key and free shipping.

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the dollmasters

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