

MOM'S JOY ROOM

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CERTIFICATE OF DESCRIPTION & VALUATION

Trudy & Trilby — A Pair of Vintage American Three-Face Dolls



COMBINED MARKET VALUE

\$275–500

Realistic quick-sale price for the pair, reflecting scarcity of well-preserved examples

COMBINED ESTIMATED WORTH

\$550–825

Ceiling for two complete, well-preserved multi-face dolls sold individually to specialty collectors

Trudy (1946, composition)

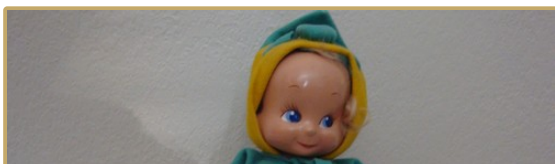
Market Value \$150–275 | Estimated Worth \$300–450

Trilby (1951–52, vinyl)

Market Value \$125–225 | Estimated Worth \$250–375



Trudy — 1946 composition three-face doll by Three-In-One Doll Corp, "An Elsie Gilbert Creation." Shown here in her smiling ("Smily") face, painted eyes, mohair-style wig, original lace bonnet and white christening-style gown. Very good condition.



DESCRIPTION

A charming pair of vintage American three-face novelty dolls, spanning two distinct eras of American doll manufacturing and two different materials — composition and early vinyl — yet united by the same delightful engineering concept: a single doll head containing three separate sculpted faces, rotated into view by turning a knob concealed beneath the doll's bonnet or cap. Both dolls in this pair are in **very good condition** for their age, with clean, uncracked/unclouded faces, intact rotating head mechanisms, and original clothing — a genuinely difficult combination to find today in dolls of this type, as detailed further below.

Trudy is the earlier of the two, a 1946 composition doll produced by the Three-In-One Doll Corporation and marked on her original body label as "An Elsie Gilbert Creation, Patents Pending." She stands with a rounded, dimpled composition baby face, painted features, a soft wig or molded painted hair beneath her lace bonnet, and a cloth body dressed in a white christening-style gown trimmed in lace and ribbon.

Trilby followed a few years later, produced by the Ideal Novelty and Toy Company in 1951-52 as the company



Trilby — 1951-52 vinyl three-face doll by the Ideal Novelty and Toy Company, shown in her smiling face, vinyl head and limbs, original hooded jacket outfit and coordinating handbag accessory. Very good condition.

transitioned toward the then-revolutionary material of vinyl. She features a vinyl head and limbs over a stuffed cloth body, and — like many Ideal dolls of the era — includes a built-in squeaker mechanism in her torso, adding a sound element to the multi-face novelty. She is shown here dressed in her original hooded jacket-and-pants outfit with a matching small handbag accessory.

HISTORY & CONTEXT

The concept of the **multi-face doll** is far older than either Trudy or Trilby — it traces back to mid-19th century Europe, where bisque dollmakers first produced swivel-head dolls with two or three separate painted faces (laughing, crying, sleeping), a novelty concept that captivated Victorian-era children and collectors alike and persists today in the treasured antique three-face bisque dolls made by firms like Carl Bergner. The idea largely fell out of fashion in the early 20th century before experiencing a genuine American revival in the years immediately following World War II — a period when American toy manufacturers, freed from wartime material rationing and eager to capture a booming postwar consumer market, looked for novel features to set their dolls apart. The three-face mechanism, with its built-in emotional range, proved an irresistible selling point for baby dolls marketed to young girls learning to nurture and role-play the care of an infant.

Trudy was one of the earliest and most successful examples of this postwar revival. She was created by **Elsie Gilbert**, who developed and patented the turning-knob three-face mechanism used in the doll — her name appears directly on Trudy's original body label as "An Elsie Gilbert Creation, Patents Pending," a credit unusually specific for a mid-century doll designer, most of whom went uncredited on their company's products. (Some doll history sources record her fuller name as Elsie Gilbert Winterfeld.) Gilbert's design was manufactured and marketed by the **Three-In-One Doll Corporation**, a New York-based doll company formed specifically around this novelty concept — the company's very name refers directly to Trudy's three interchangeable expressions. The doll was produced in two sizes, roughly 14" and 20" tall, with a single composition head mounted on a turning collar mechanism inside a cloth body; twisting the knob at the crown of the head rotates the face between three painted expressions nicknamed by collectors and, reportedly, in period advertising as "**Smily**," "**Weepy**," and "**Sleepy**" — a happy face, a crying face, and a sleeping face, mirroring the full emotional range of a real infant. Trudy arrived at a pivotal moment in American doll manufacturing: composition, the papier-mâché-like wood-pulp material used since the early 20th century, was on its way out by the end of the 1940s, being gradually replaced by hard plastic and eventually vinyl. Trudy therefore represents one of the last major novelty doll concepts produced primarily in composition before the material fell out of favor industry-wide.

Trilby arrived just a few years later, produced by the **Ideal Novelty and Toy Company** — one of the oldest and most influential doll and toy manufacturers in American history, founded in 1907 by Morris and Rose Michtom, the couple credited with creating the very first teddy bear. By the early 1950s, Ideal was at the forefront of the American doll industry's material revolution, pioneering the use of vinyl plastic for doll heads and limbs — a durable, lifelike, and far less fragile alternative to both composition and early hard plastic. Trilby, produced in 1951-52, applied Ideal's new vinyl technology to the same beloved three-face concept Trudy had popularized just a few years before, proving how quickly a good novelty idea could be absorbed and reinterpreted across the industry using new materials. Ideal continued to experiment with multi-face and sound-featured novelty dolls throughout the 1950s and beyond — including a later doll called "Lost Baby," featuring the same three expressions (happy, sad, sleeping) combined with a voice mechanism and the catchphrase "I'm Little Lost Baby. You can make me happy!" — underscoring just how enduring and commercially successful this rotating multi-face concept

proved to be for the company across multiple product generations.

NOTABLE FEATURES

- ◆ **Trudy:** 1946 composition three-face doll, Three-In-One Doll Corp, original body label reads "An Elsie Gilbert Creation, Patents Pending"
- ◆ **Trudy:** turning-knob mechanism rotates between three painted expressions — smiling, crying, and sleeping ("Smily," "Weepy," "Sleepy")
- ◆ **Trudy:** original lace bonnet and white christening-style gown intact
- ◆ **Trilby:** 1951-52 vinyl three-face doll, Ideal Novelty and Toy Company, an early example of Ideal's pioneering use of vinyl
- ◆ **Trilby:** built-in squeaker mechanism, original hooded jacket-and-pants outfit with matching handbag accessory intact
- ◆ **Both dolls** confirmed in very good condition — clean faces, functioning rotation mechanisms, and original clothing, a rare combination for dolls of this type
- ◆ **Creator credit:** Elsie Gilbert's name appears directly on Trudy's label — an unusually well-documented designer credit for a mid-century American composition doll

"Turn the knob, and watch a whole childhood of feelings pass across one small, painted face."

Collector's note: Multi-face novelty dolls of this era are becoming genuinely difficult to find in sound, complete condition, and values have been trending upward as a result. Trudy's composition construction is especially vulnerable to the passage of time: composition is prone to crazing, cracking, and warping with age, humidity, and temperature swings, and the delicate internal turning mechanism that rotates her three faces frequently jams, breaks, or is forced out of alignment after decades of handling — leaving many surviving examples stuck on a single face or with a stiff, damaged knob. Trilby's early vinyl construction fares somewhat better against cracking but is not immune to yellowing, surface stickiness ("vinyl rot"), and squeaker failure over time, and her original cloth outfit and small handbag accessory are easily lost or damaged. Given that both dolls in this pair are confirmed in very good condition — clean faces, working mechanisms, and original clothing intact — the valuations above reflect the upper end of the realistic market range for this type of doll, and should be revisited upward if either doll's provenance or a documented Elsie Gilbert / Ideal company paper trail (box, tag, or advertisement) is located.