

MOM'S JOY ROOM

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CERTIFICATE OF DESCRIPTION & VALUATION

Antique German Celluloid Socket Head Doll — Leather & Wood Ball-Joint Body

MARTA

15½" Celluloid Socket Head, Sleep Eyes, Fully Jointed Leather & Wood Body — Circa 1920s



MARKET VALUE

\$150–300

Realistic quick-sale price; maker unconfirmed

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$325–500

Ceiling for the elaborate ball-joint body construction, fully complete



Marta — 15½" Celluloid Socket Head Doll
Leather Torso, Wood Ball-Jointed & Hinged Limbs
Circa 1920s

DESCRIPTION & HISTORY

Marta is a 15½" antique doll with a celluloid socket head set on a shoulder plate, featuring brown sleep eyes with painted lashes, painted lips, and long brunette braided hair styled with a center part and side ribbon detail. Her body is built entirely differently from the simple stuffed cloth or basic five-piece composition bodies seen on most dolls of her era — Marta's is a leather-covered body over a fully articulated wood frame, with true ball joints at the shoulders and hips and hinge joints at the elbows and knees, allowing her to be posed in a genuinely wide range of positions. She is currently dressed in a floral cotton dress with a pink collar, knit socks, and cloth booties.

Celluloid as a doll-making material rose to prominence





*Celluloid Socket Head with Brown Mohair Wig, Sleep Eyes
Fully Articulated Leather & Wood Ball-Joint Body*

in Germany beginning in the 1870s-80s and reached its commercial peak through the 1920s and into the 1930s, prized by manufacturers and buyers alike for being lightweight, washable, unbreakable compared to bisque, and capable of a glossy, lifelike painted finish. German firms — most famously Rheinische Gummi und Celluloid Fabrik Company, whose products are recognizable by the molded "turtle mark" (Schildkröt) trademark — dominated the celluloid doll trade for decades, exporting enormous quantities of celluloid-headed dolls to the American and British markets. Celluloid's very lightness and lower cost, however, also made it the material of choice for a wide range of smaller manufacturers and cottage producers across Germany, many of whom never used a molded trademark at all, or whose marks have simply not survived legibly after a century of handling.

Marta's fully jointed leather-and-wood body is a meaningfully more sophisticated and costly construction than the ordinary celluloid dolls of the period, which were far more commonly built on simple stuffed cloth bodies or basic five-piece composition limbs with minimal articulation. A body built with true ball-and-socket joints at both shoulders and hips, plus hinge joints at the elbows and knees, points to a doll originally sold as a higher-tier, more expressive plaything or display piece — likely intended for a market segment willing to pay a premium for a more "posable," almost artist-doll-like figure, rather than a basic nursery toy.

◆ *"German celluloid dolls of the 1920s were prized for their light weight and glossy, lifelike finish — but that same material makes surviving examples with fully intact, uncracked heads and complete jointed bodies genuinely harder to find today."* ◆

NOTABLE INFORMATION

- ◆ Size: 15½"
- ◆ Head: Celluloid socket head, sleep eyes, painted features
- ◆ Body: Leather-covered, fully articulated wood ball-

joint and hinge construction

- ◆ Wig: Original-style brown mohair, braided
- ◆ Era: Circa 1920s, consistent with German celluloid doll production of the period
- ◆ Marking: Handwritten numbers ("M338" / "N16") on back of shoulder plate — appears to be a later collector's or dealer's inventory notation, not an original molded maker's mark

Honest Disclosure: Close inspection of the back of the shoulder plate revealed only handwritten numbers ("M338" / "N16" in pencil or ink), not a molded manufacturer's stamp such as the well-known Schildkröt/Rheinische Gummi "turtle" trademark used by the most prolific German celluloid doll makers. Genuine celluloid maker's marks are always molded into the material at the factory, so this handwriting most likely represents a later collector's or dealer's inventory notation rather than original manufacturer identification — the specific maker remains unconfirmed. Dating to the 1920s is based on the celluloid material, facial styling, and body construction typical of the period. This doll's fully articulated leather-and-wood ball-joint body is a notably nicer construction than the basic composition bodies found on most celluloid dolls of this era, which supports a valuation above typical unmarked celluloid examples (commonly \$30–100); if a maker's mark is later confirmed elsewhere on the doll, particularly a recognized manufacturer, value could be meaningfully higher.

Mom's Joy Room | Morgantown, WV
Certificate Issued: July 2026 | Values based on eBay, Etsy & Ruby Lane
market data 2024–2025

Sandy Wade, Proprietor

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