

## Lifestyle | Features



A man performs the bullfight of “Capeia Arraiana” during the Bullfighting Day.

Children suited up in traditional matador costumes took a stab at fighting dummy bull heads mounted on two wheels before returning to the stands. Then real bulls were let into the arena and the crowd was treated to a demonstration of all aspects of Portuguese bullfighting—except the bloodletting with banderillas. Killing the bull has been illegal in Portugal for some 200 years. The “final act” in the modern spectacle involves a group of “forcados” who together immobilize the bull with their bare hands, killing it only symbolically.



A group of men perform the bullfight of “Capeia Arraiana” during the Bullfighting Day at the Campo Pequeno bullfighting arena in Lisbon.

### ‘Politically correct’

Late last year the culture minister of Portugal’s Socialist government, Graca Fonseca, voiced opposition to bullfighting, saying it was “not a question of taste but of civilization”. The remark made the aficionados of ProToiro see red, and they demanded her resignation. “Controversies are normal, but I think they come from a misunderstanding of bullfighting,” president Pessoa de Carvalho said.

“We live in a politically correct era and we are giving in to the radicalism of a minority.” Little Tiago claimed that the spectacle didn’t scare him, and his face betrayed a mix of fascination and tension as he watched the interaction of man and beast in the bullring. But the boy clenched his eyes shut when the bull charged at the “forcados”. — AFP



A man performs the bullfight of “Recortadores da Arte Lusa” during the Bullfighting Day at the Campo Pequeno bullfighting arena in Lisbon.—AFP photos



Stylist Carlyle Nuera (right) with Barbie doll prototype painter Alexandra Stoyan Lopez inspects prototypes at a workshop in the Mattel design center as the iconic doll turns 60, in El Segundo. — AFP photos



A Barbie doll prototype is displayed at a workshop in the Mattel design center as the iconic doll turns 60, in El Segundo.

## Barbie will soon be 60 — and is still going strong

She is turning 60 this year and still doesn’t have a single wrinkle. Blonde or brunette, slender or curvy, black or white, princess or president, Barbie is a forever favorite for young girls, even if she has caused controversy over the years. The iconic doll has evolved to keep up with the times—check out her Twitter feed. And despite fierce competition in the toy industry, 58 million Barbies are sold each year in more than 150 countries. “In an industry where success today is three to five years, 60 years is a huge deal!” said Nathan Baynard, director of global brand marketing for Barbie.

Around the world, Barbie is as universally known as Coca-Cola or McDonald’s, Baynard said during a recent visit to Mattel’s design studio in El Segundo, a suburb of Los Angeles. In all, more than one billion Barbie dolls have been sold since she made her debut at the American Toy Fair in New York on March 9, 1959. She was invented by Ruth Handler, the co-founder of Mattel, who was inspired by her own children to create the doll. “Her daughter Barbara was limited in the choices of her toys—the only ones were baby dolls,” Baynard recounted.

“The only role she could imagine through that play was caregiver, mother,” whereas Handler’s son “could imagine being an astronaut, cowboy, pilot, surgeon.” Barbie is, of course, a shortened version of Barbara. The doll was supposed to teach girls “that they had choices, that they could be anything. In 1959, it was a radical ideal” Baynard said. Barbie was an instant success. In the first year, 300,000 dolls were sold, he added.

### Unattainable ideal?

From the start, Barbie’s pinup measurements didn’t immediately seem all that feminist, and would spark criticism for decades to come. “In 1959, her body structure was exaggerated to match the aesthetics of the time and the fabric available,” said Barbie designer Carlyle Nuera. Since the blonde beauty first hit stores, and after a torrent of complaints over what was seen as unrealistic proportions, Mattel has made many changes—introducing multiple body types and dozens of skin tones. MG Lord, author of “Forever Barbie,” also argued that the original criticisms were unwarranted. “She is what the child wants her to be. How a child sees the Barbie doll is often framed by how the mother of that child feels about the idea of femininity,” Lord told AFP.

“The problem here is not an 11.5-inch plastic object. The problem is the larger culture and the idea of femininity.” In 1965, four years before Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon, Barbie became an astronaut. In 1968, the first black Barbie doll, a friend named Christie, hit store shelves. Lisa McKnight, senior vice president and global general manager for the Barbie brand, said that today, 55 percent of the dolls sold around the

world have neither blonde hair nor blue eyes. Mattel has more than 100 people working in the El Segundo design studio, a massive hangar-like building wedged between Los Angeles International Airport and a freeway. Designers begin with a simple sketch. From there on, every bit of a prototype is made by an army of experts—from sculpting the doll using state-of-the-art software and 3D printing to painting the face, styling the hair, choosing fabrics and crafting the clothing patterns.

The entire design process for a new Barbie can last 12 to 18 months. Then, the prototype is sent from the California workshop to factories in China and Indonesia for mass production. “Sometimes, you see her on a shelf and then it gets back to you: oh yes, I designed this one!” Nuera said with a smile.

### Instagram photo shoots

Barbie is not only a toy store success—she has a massive social media presence, and is something of an “influencer,” with millions of followers. She has an actual identity: Barbie Millicent Roberts, who hails from the made-up town of Willows in the Midwest. And now, she speaks directly to girls about her life, and important current topics. In 2018, the brand launched a sweeping campaign to help young girls close the so-called “Dream Gap”—using Barbie to teach them to believe in themselves, and not to buy into sexist gender stereotypes.

Barbie has a hair stylist, makeup artist and photographer who travel with her “for real” in the United States and abroad for Instagram photo sessions (check out @barbiestyle). The account has nearly two million followers. So, does Barbie have it all as she hits 60, but remains forever young, still single and without kids (so far)? “The narrative of the Barbie brand is that she’s a young woman and she’s independent and pursuing careers,” McKnight said. — AFP



Barbie doll prototypes are displayed at a workshop in the Mattel design center as the iconic doll turns 60, in El Segundo.