

The sad story of Suntan Suzy.

From the annals of “lost and forgotten toys” we have the sad tale of Suntan Suzy. This little doll can tell us a lot about ourselves and our society. Because we need to ask ourselves what went wrong? How did this come to pass, and what reflection does this have on our culture?

Obviously someone, at sometime, gave the “go ahead” to design, and develop this doll. They did so, made a large batch of these playthings and then nothing happened. Some sold, but the bulk collected dust and then were discarded into the vast garbage dumps of the 1960’s.

Suntan Suzy Doll

Suntan Suzy was a doll that would develop a tan if you put her in the sunlight. Back in the shade, her tan would fade. She came on the market in 1962, but lasted for only one season. As far as I can tell, she was the only doll that has ever had the ability to tan.



SUNTAN SUZY
TANS and FADES

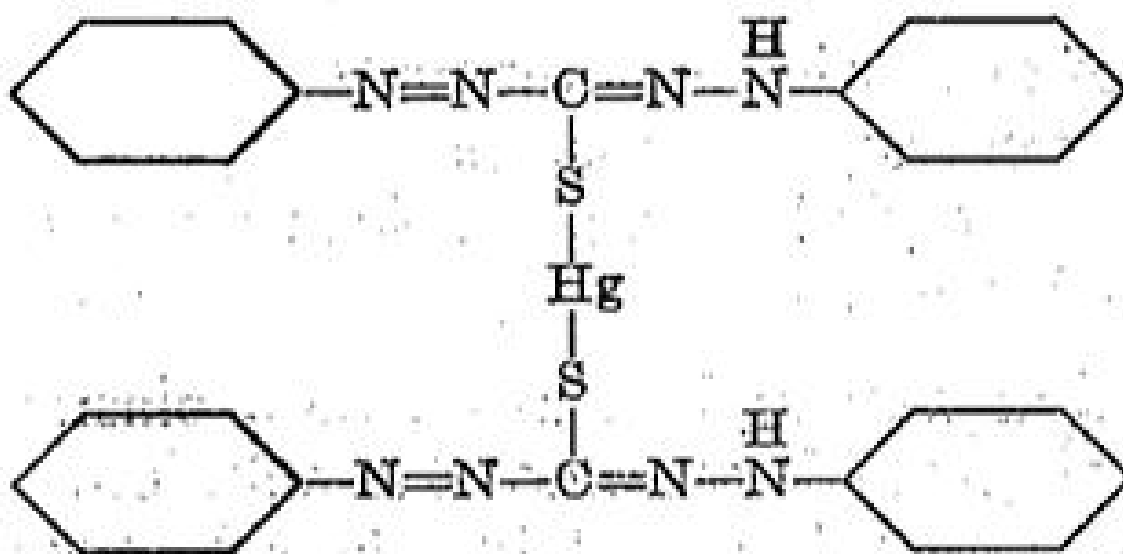
... Over and over again! Put her in the sun—her "magic" skin darkens; in the shade—pale again! With clothing change and beach accessories,

6.98

Advertisement for Suntan Suzy. From the Arizona Republic — Nov 23, 1962.

The secret of Suntan Suzy...

The chemistry responsible for producing the tanning effect is described in Patent No. 2,921,407 (Jan 19, 1960) – “Simulating Sunburning Toy Dolls and Figurines”: 0.5 gram of mercuric bis-dithizonate having the following structural formula was dissolved in 1000 grams of dioctyl phthalate.



The Suntan Suzy secret.

1550 grams of a high molecular weight polyvinyl chloride polymer, in powdered form, were dispersed in this solution by stirring for ten to fifteen minutes. The latter material was specifically Bakelite Company QYNV polymer. Thus a plastisol formulation containing the phototropic dye dissolved in the liquid dioctyl phthalate (plasticizer phase) was obtained. About 120 grams of this plastisol formulation were then poured into a two piece steel mold, this having its inner surface previously coated with a silicone oil release film. This was then placed in an oven at 140 degrees centigrade and held at this temperature for eight minutes to allow solution of the polyvinyl chloride polymer phase. The mold and contents were then removed from the oven, cooled to room temperature, and the now solid form of the doll figure removed.

An amazing girl...



The Suntan Suzy doll within the original packaging. The image source: worth-point

The figure thus produced was transparent and red in color. Upon exposure to sunlight a progressive darkening to a brown, then blue-black color occurred during a period of about three to four minutes, simulating a "sunburning" effect.

When the doll was shielded from the sun a return to the original color took place, being visually complete after a period of eight to ten minutes. This action was repeatable with no detectable change in functional characteristics being noted after several dozen cycles.



Fully boxed up Suntan Suzy.

It seems like an interesting gimmick for a doll. Curious it never caught on.

Society

Perhaps it wasn't marketed properly, or perhaps it did not fit the profile of girl doll play. Most of the girls that I grew up with didn't take their dolls with them to the beach. Instead, they preferred to play with them indoors, within the comfortable confines of the house.

This little post is one of those "hum..." style posts, and will soon be forgotten. Much like a comma is in the book "War and Peace".

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