

Harry – gefangen in der Zeit

Culture and society

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In Germany, newborns frequently receive at least one stuffed animal at birth. But many adults in this country also have a soft spot for the "low maintenance," plush miniature versions of lions, bears or penguins.

People in Germany frequently associate stuffed animals with the Steiff company. Margarethe Steiff (1847-1909) was born in the little village of Giengen in Baden-Württemberg and, after a bout with polio as a young girl, lost the use of both legs and could only move her right arm with great pain. Although Margarethe Steiff spent her entire childhood in a wheelchair, she fought for her school education and later for an apprenticeship as a dressmaker. In 1877, with the help of her family, she opened a felt store complete with a tailoring shop, and soon, she was able to hire several seamstresses. In addition to the usual clothes, in 1879, she created an "Elefäntle:" a felt pincushion in the shape of an elephant. It was a daring experiment, as adults were not interested in the sewing cushion.

It was, however, a huge success with children who wanted to play with it! So Steiff and her employees created more animals. The most well-known example is undoubtedly the teddy bear. Furthermore, since 1904, every Steiff animal has a "Knopf im Ohr," a button in the ear, that has become the company's trademark.