

# WHIMSICAL

*one-of-a-kind creations*



Nearly twenty-five years ago, while attending Parson School of Design in New York City, I, passed the world famous Tiffany's jewellery store on Fifth Avenue and saw, displayed in the windows, the over-the-top character dolls created by artist, Van Craig. I had never seen anything like them before! Amazed, I knew immediately that I wanted to create dolls, too.

I dived headfirst into the art of doll making and have been doing it ever since. While Van Craig's work initially planted a seed, my own work, happily, is very different. I would describe it as more whimsical than wild.

My one-of-a-kind (OOAK) art dolls, primarily consist of large pieces measuring 17" -18" tall, and, at times, even larger. But, as a small child I had always been drawn to little things. I would create tiny fairies out of Play-dough and make homes for them out of found acorns, walnut shells and leaves. This study of small things would keep me busy for hours much to my mother's relief!

Still, my interest in miniature things continues. Judging by the millions of people responsible for the huge success of the miniature business trade, I am glad to see I am not the only one intrigued by this fascination. The very idea that someone would recreate the most mundane items of daily life in such a tiny scale seems extraordinary! I knew I wanted to combine my two most favourite things; doll making with miniatures.



In recent years, I set about exploring this idea further by creating miniature doll(s) within a shadow box. I know this idea is not new but for me it was exciting. So much for the idea of 'thinking outside the box' by incorporating the doll 'within' a box, I was free to open my creative 'window' even further.

My shadow boxes are, at times, smaller versions of my character dolls, 'Happily ever after' (the dish and the spoon) or 'Before the Fall' (Humpty Dumpty), for instance. Some depict my favourite scenes from books such as Alice in Wonderland; 'The Tea Party,' 'The Duchess' and 'Alice.' But mostly,



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like Beatrix Potter, I like to imagine a made up world where tiny mice or bunnies play or go about their daily lives.

I usually start with a quick sketch of my idea, and then I set about creating the dolls, large rocks or even trees out of Premier light weight stone clay by LaDoll. Using the experience I gained in my years in the fashion industry, I design and hand sew all their clothing and many of their accessories; hats, coats and handbags whenever possible. I try to stay within the 1/12th scale format but, at times, they have to be slightly larger. It's as much fun painting the background scenes as it is creating the characters themselves. It is where I get to decide what moment in time my characters will be captured forever!

After all the details are complete, assemble all the pieces. It's always a thrill watching the scenes come to life! When completed, each shadow box receives a signature tag that tells its own story. This is a feature that those who have collected my work tell me they love as it is the written component that completes the illustrated shadow box. I am always grateful for my youthful days spent lost in imaginative play, the very same imaginative play that continues to stir in miniature enthusiast today...both young and old alike! 

Lillian will be providing a shadow box project in our 200th issue on sale 16 Dec.

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## Information

Lillian Alberti lives in New York State where she creates full scale OOAK art dolls as well as OOAK shadow boxes. She is a member of the AMA (Association of Miniature Artists; non typical format) as well as other doll related organisations. You can see more of her work on her website  
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