

# Ingrid Winter

"I owe an enormous debt to Barbie®. Without her, I certainly wouldn't be a dollmaker today," declares artist Ingrid Winter, whose love of dolls and training in crafts grew out of a childhood world in which Barbie® dolls were definitely center stage. "I had 17 Barbies® which I've kept over the years and occasionally bring out for old-time's sake on rainy days," Ingrid explained. "A doll family that big needs lots of clothes, and since the Barbie® doll manufacturer's wardrobes were priced beyond my schoolgirl purse — and since birthdays and Christmas never came round fast enough to satisfy me — I began crafting dolls' clothes myself. At first I just glued bits of fabric together, but a family friend soon took me in hand and taught me the proper way to use needle and thread."

The friend who taught Ingrid basic sewing skills still recalls, 25 years later, the seriousness of that little pupil and how stubbornly she worked to master the seamstress's art. In the child's mind, of course, the exquisite small garments she

was learning to design and assemble weren't doll clothes — they were clothes for real little people, for small-scale, beloved playmates whose lives she shared inside a secret play world. The pattern of that personal childhood world, with its fusion of play and the creative process, defines the soul of the artist for dollmaker Ingrid Winter. "I believe the artist absorbs real-life experience and associations, that these then recombine with the artist's imagination, like patterns in a kaleidoscope, to emerge as new realities within the arts," she said.

During her teens, when peers put aside the toys of childhood, Ingrid discovered how deeply attached she was to her dolls. "I would have considered it betrayal of dear friends to banish my Barbies®," she said. "One day, I knew, I would have to turn my back on childhood, but in the meantime I kept my private world alive in secret.

The need to choose a practical career track led Ingrid to a degree program in fashion design where she studied graphics and mastered the subtleties of dress design and pattern construction, but the logical outcome of her studies, a career in the fashion advertising industry, was hardly inspiring. She needed freedom, to be able to create from within herself.

Then, in 1982, the artist met Brigitte Lohrmann, whose shop in Hamburg was among the first in Europe to showcase contemporary artist dolls. Brigitte Lohrmann's shop opened the door to the future for Ingrid Winter. It provided a gallery full of first-rate doll art by top artists to learn from and study. Mrs. Lohrmann was able to direct Ingrid to supply sources for materials and dolls for porcelain dollmaking. "After that lucky meeting with Brigitte Lohrmann in 1982," Ingrid told the authors, "I became completely dedicated to the dollmaker's art."

Each one-of-a-kind Ingrid Winter doll begins as a rough clay sculpture from which the artist designs an even rougher mold. The real work comes when the poured porcelain emerges from the mold. Ingrid devotes long hours to sculpting fine detail and refining each piece until even work formed within the same mold takes on the quality and uniqueness of one-of-a-kind doll art.

"I love the elegant glow of fine porcelain," the artist told us, "and I try, through sculpted detail and painting, to enrich and warm this essentially cold medium." She mixes her own colors and applies delicate layers of paint, much as an artist working in two dimensions builds color and texture on a flat canvas. For each doll, she decides whether painted or inset glass eyes best suit the artistic statement.

Ingrid designs and personally sews each costume worn by her dolls which range from storybook characters to sensitive portrait dolls and figures of purest fantasy. Their clothes, fashioned from fabrics and trims garnered during decades of collecting, include old and new velvets, silks, leathers, and fur, precious laces and gold braids, antique buttons, beads, sequins, silk flowers, feathers, and more. "I don't craft *doll* costumes," the artist explained. "I craft real clothing in mini-



Ingrid Winter is especially fond of 30in (75cm) one-of-a-kind Enya crafted in 1989. Enya's head and limbs are molded white porcelain; her body is stuffed fabric constructed around a sturdy wire armature. For this doll's wig, the artist used her own hair, painstakingly inset one hair at a time into the wax coating that overlays the porcelain head. *Photograph by Volker Wengert. Courtesy of Ingrid Winter.*

re, with the linings, insertions, and closures one finds in the *haute couture* of the real world.”

Large dolls from this studio average 26in-30in (65cm-5cm) tall and have human hair wigs. (The artist also crafts miniature dolls which have mohair wigs.) Doll bodies are usually linen or cotton, well stuffed and built around a posable wire armature. Beginning in 1992, Ingrid has experimented with static porcelain costumed figures in addition to her elegant posable dolls. These add dimension to the artist's power of expression and provide a new challenge, and challenge is what Ingrid Winter seems to enjoy most.



*Le Lis (The Lily)* is a 28in (70cm) white porcelain doll with glass eyes and a human hair wig elegantly styled by the artist. Lily's dress is cotton batiste and silk. "I do not make *doll* clothes," the artist said emphatically. "I craft real outfits in miniature, complete to the finest dressmaking detail. Photograph by Volker Wengert. Courtesy of Ingrid Winter.



*Romeo and Juliet*, 26in (65cm) and 24in (62cm) respectively, are a one-of-a-kind duet delicately painted and exquisitely costumed. Note the attention to period costume and to the Renaissance contour and coloration of Juliet's face. Both dolls have painted eyes and lashes. Romeo's wig is sheepwool; Juliet has a human hair wig. Photograph courtesy of Ingrid Winter.



*Salome* is a one-of-a-kind doll crafted entirely from white bisque. The 28in (70cm) figure, created in 1992, has a human hair wig, glass eyes, and real hair lashes. Her exotic artist-designed and crafted costume is fine silk. Photograph courtesy of Ingrid Winter.

An exquisite one-of-a-kind miniature clown bust crafted in 1992. Observe how asymmetrical painted detail heightens the power of the design. *Photograph courtesy of Ingrid Winter.*



One-of-a-kind Alice in Wonderland doll crafted in 1990. This 26in (65cm) interpretation of a beloved theme gazes, amazed, at the unexpected sights "down the rabbit hole." The artist's charming interpretation of Lewis Carroll's White Rabbit holds the watch from its waistcoat pocket. *Photograph courtesy of Ingrid Winter.*





A one-of-a-kind portrait doll sculpted in 1992. Eyes and lips are so expressive it is difficult to conceive that this beautiful child is cold porcelain! *Photograph courtesy of Ingrid Winter.*