

A Dreamer's Damsels

GERMAN ARTIST INGRID WINTER STRIVES TO EXPRESS
THE COMPLEXITY OF FEMININE NATURE ✻ BY URSULA DRISKELL

One of Germany's most prolific doll artists today is Ingrid Winter. This artist's personality shimmers through her work, which has been described as romantic, honest, sensitive and gentle. Her imagination, combined with her

ten years of training in fashion and graphic design, culminates in one-of-a-kind porcelain dolls portraying the complexity of feminine nature.

Playing with dolls during her childhood in the small German village of Worms on the Rhine grew into a pas-

sion. Dolls were Winter's faithful friends, her patient audience and her silent solace. Now, her own creations seem to fulfill these childhood memories. Winter says she is attracted to dollmaking because it allows her the opportunity to apply all her knowledge to the process of creation and then to forget it immediately after completion of a doll. Her constant striving for perfection is the never-ending force that leads her on. She is sometimes petrified by the possibility of not achieving her vision or not touching her fantasies.

Winter became a doll artist because antique dolls were not within her financial reach. She believes dolls represent feelings that one can touch; through her work she can offer the viewer her ideas. Her study of graphic design, fashion and costumes have helped her to transfer her desires into three dimensions.



PHOTOS: L. WINTER

German artist Ingrid Winter describes her work as detached and enlightened. Her *Le Rêve d'Été*, left, is a nine-inch-high bust with a right hand. The head is adorned with air-dried and preserved winter and spring flowers—and preserved insects!



The same meticulous attention given to the dolls is dedicated to all their accessories. The artist works with selected fabrics from India and makes her dolls' eyelashes from mink. However, Winter tries to avoid having the expression of her dolls diverted by overblown wigs or opulent material and costumes. As early as 1983, she won gold medals at the Global Doll Society's competition and has also taken top awards at EuroDoll events. Quite often, the work of an artist resembles that artist; however, in Winter's case, one is almost afraid to touch her dolls because her being so completely comes through in her work. The sensuality of her figures is not intentional, she insists. She describes her work as neither decadent or bored; rather she says her dolls are detached and enlightened. "It is better to keep a certain distance from my creations," the artist explains, "otherwise the danger is too great to apply patterns, to become mechanical, to reproduce oneself and to calculate."

Winter, who studied fashion design in Hamburg and graphic design in Mannheim, sketches and paints daily. She regards both disciplines as warm-up exercises that are always new and difficult. She must keep her skills honed in order to quickly seize an im-

This 1991 piece, *The Sleeping Beauty*, is made of white porcelain, as are all of Ingrid Winter's dolls.

pression on paper, which she can later transform into three dimensions. Inevitably, Winter says, there comes a moment when she feels the creation take on a will of its own, battling her preconceived interpretation. At this point, she becomes impatient and has to escape by involving herself in mundane activities such as cooking or gardening.

Winter works completely alone. She makes her own molds, wigs and clothes; everything, even the sewing, is done by her hand. Hats, shoes and jewelry are also designed and made by her alone. All her dolls are poured in white porcelain, as she likes its transparency, and then are painted to impart a lifelike look. After a doll is completed, Winter photographs it, and if the photographic image matches her original vision, she receives the ultimate satisfaction. Her work sells for about \$2,000; American collectors must purchase it di-



rectly from her, as there is no American distributor yet.

In September 1993, Ingeborg Schiborr of Galerie Calico in Essen, Germany, staged an exhibition of Ingrid Winter's work. Schiborr runs her gallery with style, and the German artists have confidence in her. She is one of the pioneers of the German art doll movement, having mounted exhibitions of the work of Brigitte Deval, Sabine Esche, Annette Himstedt and Hildegard Günzel as early as 1984 and '85. Winter's exhibition ran for four weeks and attracted customers from the area. Schiborr says of the reaction to the show: "Guests and visitors were positively amazed at the variety of sizes, expressions and shapes of Ingrid's pieces. The reactions ranged from speechlessness to superlatives." Despite the success of this show and high demand for her dolls, Ingrid Winter feels the never-ending fear and frustration of all artists. Will her touch vanish or can she hold and keep it? However, it seems that she has, by no means, exhausted her talent yet. Her imagination can still run wild in the shape of her dolls.

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Each sister in the 18-inch Twin Brats is made with a different head and shoulder plate.

