



All Dolled Up

by Jean Edsall

"Why Dolls?"



Dolls have been part of the human story since prehistoric times. They depicted religious figures or were playthings. Early dolls were probably made from clay, fur or wood. Ancient dolls have been discovered in children's graves in Egypt, Greece and Rome. Eventually, Europe became the major source for doll production. Dolls found from that era were primarily made of wood.

In the 1800's composition was developed. (This is a collective term for mixtures of pulped wood or paper.)

When these mixtures were molded under pressure, mass production of doll heads and bodies began.

Sometime around 1920, glazed porcelain doll heads and unglazed bisque [ceramic] heads became popular.

The Jumeau family made a bisque doll head on a swivel neck in the 1860's. The head was put on a body that was kid-covered wood or wire, or of kid stuffed with sawdust.

These were replaced in the 1920's with molded plastics.

So, this is a short history of dolls.

What makes little girls tick? Why do they play with dolls? What are the advantages? Little girls learn to be kind playing with their dolls. They learn to express love and to emulate their own mothers' gentleness with a real baby. They imitate all the things mommy has to do for her baby, and act out actual and pretend situations. (Playing house,

planning parties, playing doctor, school, changing clothes, designing outfits.)

Imagination is the precursor of creativity.

Years pass, the girl grows up. Maybe she is doing various sorts of crafts, like sewing, painting, or ceramics. If she discovers that doll-making is possible (either cloth or porcelain), the creativity will blossom.

Once again, she can imagine the completed picture, to the finest detail. Is this to be a baby doll-on which to display a treasured christening gown or baby outfit from her own child? Will it be a child doll that looks so much like a grandchild, niece, nephew, son or daughter? It is possible to replicate a wedding gown for a lady doll, a sports outfit for a certain school or team. Maybe she wants to reproduce a favorite doll that she had as a child, or a favorite character from a book or movie. The possibilities are endless. Fairies, angels, ethnic, and of course antique costumes can be challenging to recreate.

One thing I know for sure: making dolls is fun, relaxing, and therapeutic. If you have not yet had the pleasure of experiencing this "art", you should do so as soon as possible. You will find there are so many dolls, so little time!

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