

Catherine Mather - Australia

In the 1980s I worked with theatrical, masquerade and fancy dress costumes and became interested in porcelain antique reproduction dolls. I imagined making and dressing dolls would be a nice pastime, using my skills to create small scale period costumes for the antique style dolls. It didn't take long to be constrained by the rigid, static poses of the dolls. I started to sculpt my own and I never looked back. The time has flown by, I think I am as enthusiastic about what I do now as I was when I started 20 years ago.



Jane is a young regency lady sitting serenely on her garden bench holding her leather bound book, quill in hand, poised to write. She is dressed in a beautiful silk gown trimmed with golden antique braid. Her lovely face is framed by a natural straw hat. She is all porcelain. Her seated height is 15 inches tall.



Strolling down the Avenue are Nadine & Zar. She is dressed in silk ivory jersey. Her ensemble features a hobble skirt and jacket with stand-up collar, ivory gloves, shoes and a striking black and ivory tower hat. Zar, a Russian wolfhound, is handmade of porcelain and mohair.

Porcelain clay has always been my medium of choice. It has a perfect smooth surface to sculpt and paint. It's a little tricky to perfect and very unforgiving to work with, but very stable with a longevity of centuries. I can't see myself moving away from porcelain, but I hope to have the time to sculpt a new size and move down to a smaller scale to create group scenes.

The smallest things can influence what you sit down to create. My mind retains so many images, from modern media to century-old sculptures and paintings. But I think the greatest influences are the people you surround yourself with. Family facial gestures and seated body positions create life models to work from and lend a resemblance to many of my pieces.

My inspiration is drawn from original historical costumes, costume museums and lots of books. From this I get a feel for the era and then interpret it into smaller scale for what era I may be working on. The costume research can sometimes take longer than the sculpting. I find it very satisfying to be creating dolls by my own hand in small editions. My motto has always been quality not quantity!

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Irene is limited to 15 pieces. My inspiration came from Whistler's peacock room. I remembered viewing it at the Metropolitan in New York and then came across it in a book. The peacock on the stand is a copy of one from the wall of this room. The dress is made from antique net and glass beads, and the underskirt is peacock green silk satin. Her head feathers are actually emu feathers from a local emu farm and I have embellished them with peacock feather eyes. The wig is mohair and the shoes are black leather. She stands 18½ inches tall.



One-of-a-kind Ariel is dressed in white silk chiffon and applied gold lace. In her hands she holds a garland of spring pansies. Her wig is handmade chestnut mohair, dressed with a halo of pansies. From the ground to her wing tip she measures 18 inches tall.



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