

JAC DESIGNS ~



JAC Designs is an all-encompassing design team of three sisters, who with their shared passions and combined efforts, are making some of the most beautiful and unique dolls today! Divided into three sections, *Fionabhair Repaints* led by Jennifer Sutherland, *HoudiniMe* by Shari Depp, and *Cobblers Corner* by Chrissy Stewart, they fulfill the creative process from beginning to end. *Fionabhair* repaints is where the dolls are given their new faces, hair, and where their personalities first begin to come into being, *HoudiniMe* is where haute couture in miniature is performed, creating highly personalized wardrobes with an old world passion for delicate detail work, and *Cobblers Corner* comprises the finishing touch of incredibly detailed miniature shoes which are made to perfect scale, completing the process. The following interview provides a bit of insight into their unique craft.

When did you begin creating one of a kind dolls?

Jennifer ~ I began creating one of a kind dolls about 2 1/2 years ago along with my sister Chrissy Stewart. Our first doll was created from a Barbie.

Shari ~ I have been making dolls for about 30 years now and doll clothes since I have been about 8 years old.

Of all the different expressive art forms to choose from, what made you want to choose dolls as your medium?

Jennifer ~ Its very strange because when I was younger, I only painted on canvas and art paper, but had longed to go one step further and wanted to learn to sculpt. I remember talking to my sister stating it would be so neat to create our own dolls!

Shari ~ I have always loved dolls and had a huge collection of barbies when I was a young girl.

Your work seems to be done to such an exacting level of perfection, are you self-taught, or did you learn some other way?

Jennifer ~ First I want to say thank you for the flattering comment! Doll repainting has been self-taught, in which I am always learning. I feel I can always do better then the last, that's why we strive to bring out original dolls each time outdoing the last.

Shari ~ I am self-taught. I also pick up all kinds of tips from books or magazines.

Where do some of your inspirations come from?

Jennifer ~ We are inspired by books, movies, and our imagination as if we were actually playing. What we would LOVE to see in a doll, we try to create. There are still so many ideas we haven't even touched yet!

Shari ~ I love working with Jenny! She "inspires" me! and we are really "playing" when we do our dollies together!

It is very interesting that many of your creations come about as a cooperative effort between sisters, how do you feel working as a team affects the finished result?

Jennifer ~ I would have to say it was meant to be to work with my sisters. I don't think I could have this close of a rapport with anyone outside my family. We know what we are thinking and think alike. Our ideas, when we sit in the same room with each other, evolve so quickly that we always surprise ourselves on how much we have accomplished from one little idea. It fits together so easily.

Shari ~ I think working together is wonderful! I can then put so much energy into the outfit and I don't have to do their hair etc... Plus Jenny is a wonderful artist with the faces... Her dollies have "souls". They are like little people... and some have quite an attitude!

The Power of Three

Can you describe the process you go through when creating a new doll?

Jennifer ~ For me, in repainting... I try to imagine the doll and what she would like look even before I take the factory paint off the face. I sometimes do the hair first, and other times I go straight to the face. I remove all the original paint off the vinyl ~ starting with a clean slate. I use high quality acrylic paints and sealers, then seal the whole face after I am finished. Sometimes the process isn't that simple. I also re-sculpt the male dolls faces in which takes a lot of time and care.

Shari ~ When designing costumes, my inspiration can come from many different places. Works of art, paintings, sculptures, a movie, a book - even a piece of jewelry can be the start of a wonderful design.

As you're making these one of a kind dolls, do you find that they begin to take on their own personas?

Jennifer ~ Oh my goodness! Yes!! Most definitely! They have their own unique characters to each one. It's quite fascinating to see the difference in attitudes and characters of each doll.

Shari ~ With me, I let the dollie "talk" to me... She will tell me what she wants! That is why I am so lucky to work with Jenny who is such a wonderful artist! I actually have dreams about these dolls when I am working on a project and can't wait to get started when I wake up!

Since all of your creations are so unique, is it difficult to see these dolls go once they are sold?

Jennifer ~ There are some dolls to this day that are very close to my heart. Our first doll, Angelique, from the "Forbidden Love" Series, she still holds a special place with us. Nimowae is another. So definitely... There are quite a few that are very close to us, and always will be. That's why it's so wonderful to know they go to good homes!

Do you have a favourite kind/style of doll to make?

Jennifer ~ I love repainting Genes, because the mold of the face is so soft, she can turn into so many things! Tyler Wentworth dolls.... they can look like miniature woman when you repaint them! And I would have to say, although he is the hardest of them all... Trent Osborne's are my most challenging and one of my favorites. Maybe because he is so challenging, that's why I like him so.

Shari ~ I don't necessarily have a favorite kind. I work in all mediums from clay to cloth to the fashion dolls.

Sometimes you re-create famous characters from movies, etc... What is it that intrigues you to want to make a certain person into a doll, do they have to hold a certain inspiration for you?

Jennifer ~ I use the same method as I would if I were going to paint them in a cartoon character form. I study the person and see what stands out in their character the most to me, then I try to concentrate on those characteristics to help me create the celebrity I'm trying to achieve.

Shari ~ I love to read, so I like to recreate characters that are not readily out there. I have an extensive library from Antique Oz and Raggedy Ann books to Sherlock Holmes and Jules Verne so any of these subjects could become a project!

Are you working on any interesting projects currently?

Jennifer ~ Oh yes! We always have ideas whirling around our heads, in fact we have one large project coming up that will be up for auction! We actually don't have enough hours in the day for completing all our ideas.

Shari ~ I am always working on several projects at one time plus have ideas forming for future projects. I love giving these dolls play-ability. In other words... several ways you can wear an outfit or accessories. I want my designs to be something that can be past down to future generations and enjoyed for years to come.

Where can people view your work?

Jennifer ~ They can view our work on our website at: <http://www.jacdesigns.com> or through Ebay, in which we always have JAC Designs in our title of the auction.

Dolls (clockwise from left to right):
Custom made Kambriel doll, Fionabhair, Callista, Genie, Cici (background), Rionach, Sun Goddess, Angelique, Múcha.

