Linda Down

*Lombard Bears* *Australia*

by Pam North

Linda Down lives in the “Land Down Under”. This Australian artist first started making bears in 1995. Ten years previous, in 1985, she had finished an arts course, and was creating wood and fiber sculptures, which she exhibited at galleries in Perth, Western Australia. These pieces were large and fun to make, but eventually she decided to try something different, and signed up for a teddy bear-making workshop. Her first creation quickly led to designing her own range of teddy bears, under the name *Lombard Bears* *Australia*, and selling them through a store. Despite having three jobs at the time, in between them she would spend every minute making bears, She was hooked!

Initially she was making traditional styled bears using the best German mohair, and quality leather and suede for the paws. In 2008, at the Perth Teddy Bear Show, she saw a demonstration of needle-felting, and became very excited by this fabulous technique, That night she had her first needle-felted nose underway, and soon she was off and running with bears and all sorts of other creatures.. “Since then. most of my creations are made using needle-felting to create the unique characters' faces,” she explained. Her use of needle-felting imparts wonderfully droll and whimsical expressions on the caricature faces of her animals, giving them very unique personality.

Linda's efforts have garnered her Toby Awards in 2012 and 2016, plus many Australian and Taiwan awards in past years.

New horizons of creation still beckon, as Linda outlined. “At present I am working on pushing the boundaries of needle-felting by creating even more characterized pieces, and incorporating wire armatures to add a new dimension to my work. I love that needle-felting is a way of truly sculpting in fiber; it is mind blowing! I find I am inspired by pictures of animals, animation, and children’s books, and I think the time I spent working nights at a theater for 13 years comes popping out in my designs, as I love dramatic, rich, and bold color combinations. I love all aspects of bear-making, and find it a challenge to continually strive for the highest quality workmanship. Seeing a creation come to life is pure magic, and it's very addictive! I dream of taking my bear-making skills to new levels, creating creatures from my own fantasy land that I see in my mind, and also to create a truly unique range of OOAK (one of a kind) artist bears.”

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