A Grand Balancing Act

by Pam North

One of the constant surprises in the stories about artists is the infinitely variable sources of their inspirations. In Rose Lacefield's case, some of that muse has come from her children. Her family is large - 11 kids, ages 8 to 38. After she and her husband had two biological children, they opened up their hearts and household to adopt nine more, all kids from mothers with drug and alcohol problems. What is amazing is that this Washington artist can somehow amazingly find time from the demands of parenting to pursue her doll making artistry. Lacefield is a master at balancing the demands of her life.

Artistic endeavors were an early part of Lacefield's life. In grade school in Illinois, she lived near a clay deposit, so she amused herself by making gnomish figures, and in high school, she became skilled enough with pencils and pastels to render portraits.

Lacefield's career first encompassed the military, then nursing, then personnel supervisor of a paper mill in Washington. When her mill job ended in the late 1980s, she hit a real turning point in two major ways. Three Native-American children in need of a home came into Lacefield's family, and she also discovered the art of doll making. A doll magazine had planted the seed. She researched materials online, and began making 5” to 7” figurative sculptures, working in a mixture of Cernit plus Puppen Fimo polymer clay. Her learning experience was one of trial and error, which she embraced with gusto. She explained her philosophy, “The biggest mistake one can make that will snuff out the flame of inspiration is allowing the fear of failure to paralyze the effort to try. I learn primarily from my mistakes, so I'm not afraid of them. They need to be conquered by prayer and perseverance. Then they either get filed away, or they become little victories to keep my engine running.”

It took a year to get to her next endeavor, her *Shoohoos*. “The *Shoohoos* were my very first BJDs; they are 6-inch little cartoon characters. They have three toes and lamb ears, and are little miracles, every one of them.” Lacefield has found her niche in BJDs, as she elaborates, “For artists a BJD is a 3D palette, of all kinds and flavors, to whimsically create upon. Ball-jointed dolls speak a language of their own, understood by all who love them, no matter their country or culture. They seem to bring back the early love of working with color crayons, making doll clothes with bits of fabric, and creating little friends with clay. The uninhibited joy of creating, that we thought we had lost after childhood, is rekindled by them.”

Lacefield expresses herself in 27 centimeters (10.6'') size, crafted of synthetic resin. Her dolls have Pabol lifelike acrylic eyes, and synthetic wigs, and are accompanied by whimsical tales she has written especially for each character. The stories often are inspired by her real-life children and incidents in their lives, such as *Jemima,* her latest creation. *Jemima* bears the resolute expression characteristic of her daughter by the same name in the human realm, and her story revolves around losing her toy elephant, *Tallullah*. The first version of *Jemima* was a OOAK sculpture of polymer clay over silicone wire joints, and was the precursor to a more realistic BJD version of 27 cm, and is more realistic, sculpted after much practice (fixing the mistakes) with the *Shoohoos*. “*Jemima* required 300 hours of work to design her body alone. She is newly home from the factory in resin form, so I am still figuring out who she is, and what she likes to wear. She is being prepared for an August doll show I will be attending.”

Lacefield says her customer base and Internet exposure introduces her to people of diverse backgrounds and experiences, something she very much enjoys. Her work is devoted to a higher purpose which is paramount in her life. “We were made in out Creator's image,” she explained, “so by nature we have a strong tendency to create. When we don't do that, I believe we sense something within us is not functioning fully, and there is an unfulfilled longing that nags us inside. As each one of us is incredibly unique, so is what we have the potential to create! My prayer to God every morning is to glorify Him in all that I do, even my mistakes.!”

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