Fantasies with French Flair - Sophie Louis

by Pam North

 The French have long been known for their edgy style and superb taste, and Paris-born Sophie Louis imparts just such nuances in the creation of her captivating ball-jointed dolls, produced under the name *Nymphéas*. Louis also is sometimes known by a nickname, which she writes as K6, a somewhat misleading term for English-speaking folks. In French, 6 is pronounced as “sees”, so the K6 term is actually pronounced as “kay-sees“, or “cassis”, which is a fruit (a black currant). She chose the whimsical name for a dolls forum, then she just kept it as part of her identity.
 Sophie Louis was born in 1983 in Paris, where she lived until 3 years ago. She wanted a peaceful life and less expense. “Paris is an amazing city, but for me it has too many people, too much agitation and stress. Now I live in the countryside, with farm animals nearby in a big meadow. I love that!”
 She had a rich family life, saying that she spent her first seven years in her mother's library, as am avid reader, and what was left of her spare time drawing in a back room of her house. Her father loved photography, a hobby he shared with Sophie and her sister. Her mother loved beautiful things, and also liked to draw. Her grandfather made films for fun with her family, and her grandmother was loving and joyous, and full of song. Sophie has wonderful memories of her childhood years. “I have always needed to create things, draw, tinker, invent games. I love playing, I made a promise to myself when I was very young - to keep alive my inner child so I could be a happy adult. I try to be a positive person, taking life as it comes, and learning the lessons it brings me.”
 Those early years made her realize that reading and drawing were the things she most enjoyed, along with telling stories. Later, she studied graphic design, and used her artistic talents to become an illustrator with various magazines, such as *Elle,* and also worked for a company illustrating all their astrological products. Eventually, she began suggesting themes for books that she could write and illustrate for publishers' youth markets, and also created humorous illustrations for a magazine for future mothers, writing about her own pregnancy in parallel. “I was keen to create a cute and poetic universe, and that led to my creating my first ball-jointed doll (BJD), Nymphette.” she said.
 Sophie possesses other talents and passions, such as making short films, described by her as “fun films with a message”. She tries to make make new films every year, as “it helps me to connect with people.” She is part of a Kino association, a worldwide group of amateur filmmakers, in her region. “I am passionate about martial arts, Kung Fu in particular. I enjoy practicing a little bit of everything, as I’m a big kid who loves to play. I love to write and organize murder mystery parties, and I also love all kinds of role-playing games and board games.” How Sophie manages to find time to create her marvelous dolls is amazing in itself.
 Sophie is very clear about why she creates her dolls. “When I discovered the BJD (ball-jointed doll), it touched something wonderful in my heart, a revelation. It's as if they had souls and I found ... magic! From the very beginning, I promised myself that one day I would create some of my own designs, giving life to something that I could share. Making the dolls makes my life sweeter,” she reflected.
 Sophie elaborated on her doll-making process. “I sculpt each doll in Premier Clay (a lightweight, air-dry, stone clay medium). I proceed by alternating modeling and sculpture, then sanding to get a very smooth surface. I cut at the positions of joints. I model the joints, and I hollow inside the body to pass the springs through, and hollow the inside of the head to create positions for the eyes. Once the prototype is successfully executed, I send it to a factory in China that specializes in reproducing BJD molds, and they replicate the model in urethane resin. Cast lines are perfectly sanded, making the resin very smooth, to provide a perfect surface for the makeup. It is more expensive for me to have them manufactured instead of my doing it at home, but it allows me more time to dedicate myself to the creation of new models.”
 “I organize pre-orders for a model in one color at a time. Sometimes I may choose to reproduce that model again in another shade, or as OOAK (one of a kind) dolls, but I cannot guarantee the recurrence of a model. Each OOAK doll has a unique makeup and a handmade outfit. I often create a small series on a theme, such as seasons or holidays. I often have a few extra dolls that I list for sale on my website. I do not actually limit my dolls to a controlled number, but I rarely sell more than 30 dolls per pre-order. I used to make all the models I wanted without worrying about their success, investing everything I could, but today I must be realistic, as I cannot afford to put out multiples of all the dolls I create. I organize pre-orders every two months (about six pre-orders a year). Content is specified for each doll in its description. If the color of eyes and wig is not specified, then that component is not included. The price does not include accessories.” The manufacturer completes the work in three months, and the dolls are then shipped within 2-3 weeks after Sophie receives them. Clothes and accessories for her dolls may be purchased from sources who are familiar with her dolls, and whose addresses Sophie supplies. She insures each doll when shipped, and stands behind the quality of her dolls. Payment is made to her by PayPal, bank transfer, or check, and Louis offers layaway installment payments.
 Sophie described her latest projects. “Right now I'm working on Squirrel; she is a lady doll. I wanted to make a sexy character, as certainly after having a baby, a woman sometimes puts her femininity a little aside. My little boy will be 3 years old, and I needed to create a female character to also accent this part in myself. I also am working on a *nipnip* (which is a series of little funny animals with fruit on their heads), that are articulated, and Chou, a baby caterpillar. I also like creating characters with several expressions. If someone asks me to describe my dolls I usually say they are fancy characters with emotion and life in them; they resemble children in fairy tales.”
 “When I create I think of nothing. I am totally in the moment, and that's where I'm most effective. I like to use music and incense to intensify my mindset, and to lock myself in my bubble. It is such a pleasure! I make the acquaintance gradually with the character I am trying to imagine, and as it evolves, it even may become something else altogether, and this is really what I like most. Creation is essential for me,.…absolutely vital. If I do not create, my energy becomes negative, and I feel bad. My imagination is vivid, and creating allows me to bring to life what is happening in my head. It's therapy. I also like to share my positive emotions by infusing them in my creations so that they become a source of happiness for people who adopt them.”

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