Bellissimi Bambini

by Pam North

Her beautifully crafted dolls are catalysts of winsome appeal and precious innocence, and are hot items in the world of doll collectors. Talented BJD artist, Linda Macario lives and works in Scarperia, a small town in Italy, in the beautiful Mugello country near Florence, where she was born. She has been a dollmaker since 2001, but she has loved dolls since she was a child. Reminiscing about that, she said, “During a vacation in London with my grandmother, I saw a porcelain doll in a shop window, and when we went back home, my granny bought me my first porcelain doll. I can't define myself as an actual collector, but I do have a few dolls from very talented artists that I love.”

Becoming a doll artist wasn't in her plans when, after high school, she started to work as a graphic designer. Her passion was comics, especially the Japanese manga. Macario's path to dollmaking evolved naturally from her latent artistic proclivities. “Actually I didn't know beautiful, artistic dolls could exist, but one day at the office someone brought a magazine with some polymer clay dolls on the cover, and it was love at first sight for me! I am strongly linked to all that is artistic. I like to experiment and create, and designing dolls is the perfect activity to give vent to all my creative passions: drawing, sculpture, painting, photography, and sewing, I think that is the reason why making my dolls has become so important to me.”

She has converted her attic into her studio, and described it as her “magic place”. “It's where my dolls come to life from lumps of clay and liquid porcelain. “I like to experiment with materials. I previously sculpted with polymer clays like Cernit and Prosculpt, and then I discovered BJDs, which got me to use air-dry clay like Premier and La Doll. Since 2014, I also started to make limited edition porcelain dolls. I sculpted the original doll, then made the plaster molds, then did an edition from 5 to 10 pieces. I sell to collectors all around the world. A special mention is deserved for the collection of resin dolls I created in collaboration with Jpopdolls; there are now 13 different models that I have sculpted for this company, with more to come in 2017.”

Her doll sizes range, for the resin ones, from 8 to 29 inches,and her porcelain dolls measure from 8 to 15 inches. For resin and some porcelain dolls, she uses glass eyes, but sometimes she likes to paint the eyes of the smallest porcelain dolls. “I always sew the dresses of my dolls, first designing the patterns, and then creating the outfits, using antique laces and fabric that I paint. I dye and paint the fabrics because I like to obtain something unique and unrepeatable in each dress. Making the dresses is a really fun part of the work. Sometimes it happens that I need a certain size for the lines or polka dots, and if I can't find the pattern proportion and color I have in mind, I draw them myself with special fabric paints.”

Macario gets her ideas from many things. “Anything could inspire me; it could be a movie I have seen, a child at the park, or a picture at the museum. Sometimes it's just an idea in the middle of the night; usually these are the best ideas, and I have to write them down on a little notebook I keep on the bedside table.”

She derives great satisfaction from her craft. “I love to create dolls, and I'm very grateful to be able to do it. One of the most satisfying moments is when the dolls are delivered to their new home, and their new owners write to tell me how much they love them. I am infinitely grateful to all doll collectors; without them this world would not exist, and I would never have discovered this wonderful passion.”

Macario has won Dolls Industry Choice Awards from Dolls Magazine for her work: *Penny* won in 2015, and *Ginny* in 2016. Both are sculpts for JpopDolls.

Her future plans and ventures look bright and busy. “I'm working on several different projects right now: one new resin doll on *Ginny's* body; a new large resin doll like *Iris* in a limited edition; and probably something in the size of *Penny.* For porcelain I have a new collection of little dolls named *Bambolina*, which means 'tiny doll' in Italian, that are a bit different from my BJDs. My next exhibition in the USA will be at the Pacific Northwest Ball-Jointed Doll Expo in Suquamish, WA (<http://pnwbjdexpo.com/>) May 18-20, 2017, where I will present my 2017 dolls. I also plan on attending the Ball-Jointed Doll Convention (BJDC) July 27-29, 2017, in Austin TX.”

Macario's collector base have much to anticipate, and can say nothing but “Complimenti!” to her exceptional artistic work.

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