NIADA ARTIST NEWS

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ISSUE 73



Artists, Patrons, Associates and Friends,

In the Fall of 1999, the inaugural publication of *NIADA ArtForm* was sent out to subscribers for a $25 annual fee. This was a quarterly publication imagined by then President Akira Blount who wrote: *'This is the beginning of what we intend to be an exchange of information and perspectives on contemporary doll art, exclusively. We feel that such a publication fills a void in the discussion of dolls. Therefore, we will limit its focus to the concept of doll as art and fine craft.'*

The inaugural team included Production Editor Laura Edwards, Copy Editor Maralyn Christoffersen, Art Director Chris Chomick and Director of Communications Diana Rew. Over the ten issues, they saw three different Production Editors. They later added a Managing Editor, Barbara Campbell. The *Winter of 2001 ArtForm* was its final publication. Ten issues.

Diana Rew recently sent me all ten issues and I spent an entire afternoon reading through the wonderful articles provided every quarter. It was printed in black and white on buff colored paper. Most were around 15 pages (or 8 sheets of paper), folded and mailed to subscribers. As I read through article after article, I discovered that nothing is outdated - except for conference news - but even that gives some insight for todays conference planners.

It doesn't take long to see why it stopped. Was it losing money? Maybe. But more noticeably, it was the number of content contributors and the number of editors. This took a lot of time from those who volunteered theirs. And a lot of people.

The advantage we have today is the ability to share online and in color and we don't have to print and mail it out! (and there is not much staff!) I am planning to share articles from the *NIADA ArtForm* each month moving forward and I will update them with color photos of the pieces shared or, if unavailable, other works from the artist.

There is a treasure trove of information within those pages that shouldn't be relegated to the Archives. It is still relevant twenty five years later and I believe we are still adhering to their intent from 1999.



If you haven't had the opportunity to listen to Stuart Holbrook share the story of our president, Juliet Peliukh, you definitely shouldn't miss it. He hosts a podcast titled *The Curious Collector*, where you can discover Juliet's story. Simply click the link below to listen to the podcast. *Episode 48*

Stuart serves as the President of Theriaults, a company dedicated solely to auctions, education, and appraisal of dolls and figurative art. He is also a talented and entertaining auctioneer! Besides being our keynote speaker in Asheville, he did an exceptional job leading our inaugural auction.

NIADA will have nine artists exhibiting their work at DOLL PRAGUE 2026 which runs from November 6 - 8th, 2026 at the Lucerna Palace in Prague. This year's theme is dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the first French edition of *The Little Prince* (1946-2026).

'The creator of the main exhibition will be Czech puppeteer and (NIADA) doll artist Eva Hellerová Hodinková, whose work has long been associated with the "bringing to life" of wood, stories, and human imagination. For Doll Prague, she is preparing a unique original project inspired by the world of The Little Prince – a poetic journey across planets, memories, and questions that humanity has been asking since time immemorial.

The main exhibition of Doll Prague 2026 promises an exceptional meeting of two worlds – the immortal message of The Little Prince and the distinctive artistic language of Eva Hellerová Hodinková. The result will be a space where visitors can pause and remind themselves that what is most precious is often hidden precisely where the eyes cannot see.'



EVA HELLEROVÁ HODINKOVÁ
MAIN EXPOSITION ARTIST
DOLL PRAGUE

Cindee Moyer
Editor, Director Emeritus

"All grown-ups were once children....but only few of them remember it."

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince

NIADA

THE UNWRITTEN PLANETS

Worlds Yet To Be Discovered

A NIADA EXHIBITION INSPIRED BY

The Little Prince











RENATA GOLASZEWSKA ADAMCZYK
MARIA ASENOVA
STEPHANIE BLYTHE
ANN HORD-HEATHERLEY
EVA HELLEROVÁ HODINKOVÁ
ELENA MISIUNA
JULIET PELUKH
NADIA YUKHANOVA
ANNA ZUEVA

www.niada.org

A peak into Eva's studio









In Remembrance

Laura Edwards

For those of you who knew her at NIADA, Laura D. Edwards passed away at the age of 65 on Oct 2, 2023, at her home in Hampton, VA. She was born Jun 5, 1957, in SanDiego at the Navy Hospital. But she grew up and spent all of her adult life at her family home in VA.



LAURA EDWARDS

Laura was a beloved former NIADA patron since the late 1980's, a former editor of the NIADA ArtForm, and a huge doll collector leaving behind a massive collection of literally hundreds of dolls (including many from NIADA artists).

Laura's home-based private doll museum, in addition to her cake business, was her pride and joy. She would show off her dolls to people from around the world who would come to visit. She would brag about all her friends at NIADA and tell the greatest stories of the dolls she brought home from so many NIADA conferences.



A glimpse of Laura's doll collection

Though you would not realize it when speaking to her till the very end, Laura struggled for over 14 years with a very rare terminal illness, sarcoidosis (Bernie Mac disease). Lewis Edwards, Laura's brother and only sibling, moved back home to VA from GA when her condition severely worsened. Lewis did so to be caregiver to her and their ailing father during Laura's final 7 years.

Lewis came to the most recent NIADA conference in Ashville, NC in honor of his sister's memory and her extraordinary love for NIADA and her deep affection for all those she became close with over the years she was able to attend. Lewis was so very honored to meet a good number of people at the conferene who knew and remembered Laura. Lewis brought a large number of Laura's photos from older conferences for the NIADA members to have, reminisce through, and share. If you would like to reach out to Laura's brother, please feel free to at:

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Hampton, VA 23666
Ph 770-778-7082
E: WLewisEdwards@bellsouth.net



Kyoko Nakanishi, Japanese doll artist; Chieko Ogawa, editor of Doll Forum Japan; Laura Edward's, and doll artist Dan Fletcher with his wife at the NIADA conference in 1996

Thank you to her brother Lewis for sharing this with us.

Truth is Stranger than Fiction

Cindee Moyer

When I received the letter from Lewis Edwards about his sister Laura passing, he had included four pictures. Two of some of her dolls , one of Richard Simmons and the picture at right. I contacted Louise Fecher and Stephanie Blythe to see if they knew who they were. They both recognized Dan Fletcher but no one else. So, I had just written: 'Laura Edwards and friends' as a caption.



Meanwhile, over the last several weeks, I have been doing research on Akira Blount. Going through all the publications she was in listed on her website, I started looking for those issues online and I have discovered several on eBay.

Most sites sell the individual magazine, but a few sell in bundles only. I knew the exact issues I was looking for and bought one with a bundle of six DOLL READER magazines. They arrived two days ago. Last night, I found the articles I wanted and started flipping through them back to front. Most pages at the back were in black and white but two pages popped up in color. I recognized one of Chris Chomick and Peter Meder's dolls. Then one of Diane Keeler's and Heather Maciak's. Then, I read the text at the top: they had participated in a *critique* at this NIADA conference! And listed under *Up and Coming*!

Then, I flipped to the preceding two color pages. It was gallery of pictures from the NIADA conference in 1996.

And, lo and behold, at the bottom of the right hand page was this picture! Same conference, same people, different day. This one with John Darcy Noble, ours with Laura Edwards. I found who the people in the picture were. In an old issue of a magazine that came in a bundle.



John Darcy Noble, author and artist; Kyoko Nakanishi, Japanese doll artist; Chieko Ogawa, Editor of Doll Forum Japan; and Dan Fletcher, doll artist. Noble and Ogawa were speakers at the event.



The four-page spread of the NIADA conference was about the only color spread at the back of this issue. Most articles were in black and white.



from the archives

NIADA ARTFORM
A Publication by the National Institute of American Doll Artists
Winter 1999

Doll Making is an Evolving Art

SUSANNA OROYAN, NIADA ARTIST





The guiding principle of a 'good doll' is, and always has been, has the figure been designed and executed in all parts to the maximum possible for that controlling idea. For example, if the controlling idea is 'little girl in a party dress', has the sculpture, finish, costume design, and construction been done as carefully and completely as possible? For any doll we have to add the phrase 'for its time.' For older dolls and secondary market figures, the time factor is key.

Why? Doll making is an evolving art. It is always building on what went before, changing, and improving. Doll makers learn new techniques, experiment, and make design changes all the time. We are exposed to new materials, methods and styles all the time. Above all, we are usually people who are self-challenged. We like to solve new problems. Therefore, what we do in one year is likely to be very different from what we did last year or ten years prior. When you put that together with the number of people making dolls, the picture of the doll world product in one decade is radically dfferent from the product of the next.

How does this relate to NIADA work? When a person goes through the Standards process and is elected to membership it is because the Standards Committee and membership at that time feel that the work they see has achieved its maximum potential at that time. A person whose work qualified for election to memberhsp in 1980 did work that was considered to be the best work possible in 1980. When you buy a NIADA doll made in 1980, you buy a time capsule representing the best of that year.

Much early NIADA work seems - perhaps a good word would be ‘juvenile’ by contemporary standards tastes. It is. Remember, doll making builds on what is availabe at the time. When the artists first gathered to create this organization, the doll world they saw was composed of play dolls and costume figures. Construction methods were what they found or figured out from very basic traditional forms of carved wood, ceramic, wax, or wire and cloth. Little instructional material of value existed, classes were virtually non-extistant. Few of the early artists even had art training. It’s not going too far to say that the artists of the 1960s pretty much created the foundations of modern art doll making. They did the best they could with what they had. And they were able to make dolls that were the art of the doll in their time. Successive makers added, varied, and developed. What took me a decade to learn in the 1970s, (because much of it was being invented) is now possible to learn in a year or less with a multitude of classes, internet and publications to provide good information.

The unstated, but strong, feeling is that all NIADA artists will and should continue to evolve. A member elected in 1980 is expected to improve his work as long as he remains an active member. Consciously or unconsciously, most of us do. Some artists make technical changes like going from one medium to another.



Some make stylistic changes like going from children to adults, from realistic to abstract. Some may not change either, but will change by making increasingly stronger statements. Some changes are minute, others are radical. Either way, in my observation no artist in NIADA more than 10 years is doing the same work he or she did when they were elected. None of us is static. So, when you buy a NIADA piece, you have the opportunity to have a piece that represents a slice of time or a stylistic trend, in the artist’s creative life. In the art world, this is referred to as a ‘period.’ You might have a piece representative of Oroyan’s fairytale period or her Mulliner period or her Empress of the Universe period. You might have a piece representing Lichtenfel’s street people or you might have one representing her Shamans. You might have an Akira needle sculpted piece or you might have a painted piece. You have a piece of history.

Susanna Oroyan was president of NIADA from 1987-1991, an editor of NIADA ArtForm and author of several doll making books including ‘Anatomy of a Doll’, ‘Designing the Doll’, ‘Fantastic Figures’ and ‘Doll of the Art Deco Era’.

Lagniappe

Lotte Pritzel

Born Charlotte Pritzel, Lotte was a German costume designer, doll artist, and draftswoman. She began creating her distinctive wax dolls around 1908, producing handmade, unique figures intended for display rather than play, often exhibited to evoke a sense of stylized elegance and otherworldliness. These dolls, typically measuring about 60 centimeters (24") in height, featured elongated, emaciated forms with thin legs, accentuated eyes, long scrawny fingers, and luscious wigs, portraying delicate dancers or mysterious childlike figures in postures suggestive of dance and decadence.

Her dolls, which were initially flexible and made of wax, were decorated with gauze, lace, glass beads and brocade fragments, commanding high prices. The overall method prioritized visual impact over durability, with dolls mounted on small baroque stands and dressed in miniature versions of theatrical costumes, reflecting Pritzel's parallel expertise in design.



LOTTE PRITZEL
1887 - 1952







In practical application, Pritzel applied her skills to commissioned works, such as four advertising character dolls produced around 1912 for the Bahlsen company, which demonstrated her ability to adapt the process for commercial yet artistic ends; these dolls survived and were exhibited in Berlin in 2002–2003.

Pritzel's complete body of work consisted of more than 200 pieces, with approximately one-fifth of the delicate figures still surviving to this day.





Thank you to Anna Zueva who shared this aritst on Facebook.





Cover Artist

Leslie O'Leary

ARIZONA

ELECTED TO NIADA ARTIST MEMBERSHIP IN 2008



Leslie was elected to NIADA artist membership in 2008 with her charming Chinese folk-art inspired dolls. Of fabric construction, the dolls feature the adorable faces of young girls, each costumed meticulously, complete with handmade hats and accessories.

I've watched the changes in Leslie's work over the years - from sweet young girls to soulful figures that carry her story.

She is a perfect example of how we, both as people and as artists, grow and evolve over time due to outer circumstances as will as inner reflection. And how our art mirrors that change. I wanted to share a bit of her artistic evolution.

"Art inspires us to treasure our intuition, our creativity, and even our insecurities. It has an important place in my own healing and of being heard.

Art is my communication and translation to do so. I was born to be a teacher, to help others. With this voice, I could create and bring into this world something to help others find joy and to calm their upheavals and insecurities in their own life.

Now at this time, I am expanding what I create. I am finding that what is in my head and more importantly what is in my soul is now being expressed and still growing. I am able to take my time, that frantic feeling gone because I am finally safe. I am now able to walk my sacred and spiritual path.

We as artists can be sensitive people. While it is easy for us to be injured, even scarred, there is still a beauty in that sensitivity. We are the ones that can bring forth something new and inventive. And when we can finally bring that into this reality, we are indeed fortunate that we create and can share that.



Art. It is to be cherished." - Leslie O'Leary









Early Dolls

C 2008



The Seasons

2014



WINTER SPRING SUMMER AUTUMN

‘Summer’ *doll's hat has rain drops around her brim...but they could also be tear drops for the person we miss and will remember with all great love and the happiness they brought to us.*
And we hold dear what we have learned from them and will make it bloom.

Goldfish



2017



2020



2025



2026

Wings



2017 Raven: Balance



2017 Tiger Moth



2020 The Gift



2025 Emergence: Cicada



2026


I am Lotus