When dolls aren't really dolls...

the magic of Carleigh Hoff



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The Green Spirit-
Carleigh's studio mascot.

Though Carleigh Hoff refers to herself as a "doll artist," the word *doll*, as defined by Webster,* hardly comes close to describing the enchanting product of her creativity. Within the walls of her Green Spirit Studio are born a breed that she calls "little people." They are, in her own description, "Spirit manifested."

"The process of watching a new face, a new character, emerge from a simple ball of clay in my hands, is the most amazing thing," she says. "I am a midwife, birthing this new energy force and must listen carefully to help it grow strong. These characters, like those in a developing story, all have their own will regarding who they will become."



Medicine Woman- Out to gather herbs.

Carleigh easily gives away credit to her creations, but it's actually her rich background in theatrical set design, costume design and other types of dimensional art which allow her "little people" to take form. She has worked in over a dozen costume shops in Hollywood, for Bob Mackie, on a Disneyland parade, and at Paramount Studios on the first Star Trek movie. She was also employed by Hasbro Toys to design exclusively for *Jem* (the cartoon series and doll).

To Carleigh, doll-making is the perfect opportunity for combining her past experiences to create fantasy bodies and fantasy costumes, as well as the fantasy personalities that live inside.

I like making faces!," she says. "Faces with character and emotion. It's the doll's face that dictates the body, pose, and costume that will tell its story. Perhaps the story is obvious, or perhaps each viewer will read it differently.

I hope each doll will carry its viewers to another place, time, or emotional level. Such is art." Her characters stand like small actors frozen on a stage. "I am the artistic director," she remarks.

Each doll is created with incredible detail. From head to toe, every little curl or wrinkle is executed to mastery, contributing to the amazing life-like rendering that develops. Each is outfitted in a unique or authentic ensemble, down to delicate pouch or beaded decoration that completes the tale.

Since working in mixed media requires a lot of "stuff," Carleigh is a saver and recycler. All those precious little scraps from the cutting room floors in "Sequin City" have moved across the country with her many times. They all come in handy in her quest to find just the right fabric or detail for one of her dolls.



Rosie: A fairy on the wing.

Humans have always made creations in their own image— icons of goddesses, then gods, or playthings for children to learn and practice their places in their unique culture. Carleigh's little people are of all ages, and come from all corners of the earth, throughout all historical time, and from those other unseen worlds of the imagination. Their creation is totally unlimited in concept, size, style, or construction-techniques, in an ever-expanding choice of materials. "Art dolls are a celebration of the diversity of life," she says. "...unique, one-of-a-kind works of art that stand as individuals, and mixed-media figurative sculptures that, hopefully, touch the hearts of their viewers."

For a long time, Carleigh Hoff felt she was "a misplaced maker of magic, who had not yet found a home." Creating the art doll has finally taken her to a place where she would like to "hang her hat."





Above: Summer's Song
Right: Alma- A Siberian Shaman, "Calling of the Spirits"