

JUST do it!

By Dana

Are you afraid to make a doll? Does the very word 'doll kit' conjure up myriads of detailed steps? Hours of tedious hand sewing making tiny french knots? Or, other "I-have-to-be-an-artist-to-attempt-this" worries?

You will be pleased to discover in my ongoing column, a different way of 'seeing' doll construction as fun, pleasing to the eye, and budget conscious. All this takes is a little patience. The willingness to sit down and try. Are you ready? Here we go <G>.

Taking classes at your local miniature shop and at a Miniature show are great ways to learn dollmaking. Find a teacher whose dolls you like. Take time to meet the artisan to find if your personalities are compatible. Being a 'visual' person taking a class with a 'sequential' person won't always be the best combination. Of course, a good teacher should be able to adjust his/her teaching method to your style of learning.

My personal philosophy on making doll kits for doll creation, is that I provide all the material needed to complete a doll, except for tools. One benefit is you have step by step directions using the materials included. It cuts down on time (running to stores to try and find a match)...creation stress (material provided is designed to flow with pattern direction) and matching ease (no need to scope out 10 fabric stores to finding matching material, trim, laces and accessories). Plus the pattern is made for the doll body included....no altering sizes.

The bare bone doll. What do you want to create? Are your fantasies running toward certain period in time? Or do you need to add a 'presence' in your dollhouse? Narrow down your choice. If possible research a couple of pictures of what you want your doll to look like.

I subscribe to many different magazines, and gleefully tear out any possibilities. These 'idea sheets' then are pasted into a notebook for future reference. It isn't usual for me to create a doll with a hair style from one picture, position from another, and dress style from yet a third photo.

Whereto buy the doll body? If you look in the classified section of any miniatures magazines, you will see ads galore. There are as many different molds, as there are people carrying them. Its up to you to write for photos, and pick your selection according to your needs.

While waiting for you doll to arrive, start searching for material. I would recommend using only natural fibers. Anything man-made will not easily hold glue. Personally, I LOVE vintage laces and fabric. Time has broken down the fibers into a soft, drapable material just begging to be turned into an heirloom doll.

Don't use flourescent orange and muted purple. Don't use black and white checkerboard type patterns with red tartan plaid! (Well unless your going for that look - such as a street person).

I wish I could give you some nutshell guidelines in color coordination and fabric combinations.

There really aren't any hard and fast rules. Sometimes its fun to just break all the rules (if there are any). The key is to spend as much time training your eye by looking at as many fashion examples from the historical period you like. Your eye for tasteful fabric and color selection will develop while you're having fun!

Look at color pictures from oil paint portraits from the period that inspires you. Try some color photos from later periods. Look at the blend of the fabric colors. If you're making your doll from scratch, spend some time with the color and fabric combinations to find what is pleasing to your eye. Find used books shops. Old Sears-Roebuck catalogs are the greatest!

Here's a hint on patterns. When choosing fabric remember to look at the SCALABILITY of the pattern. If it is a solid fabric you'll be fine. If there are unique patterns on the fabric full size daisies are out! Make sure the daisies are as small as 5-6 inch tall person would wear on her apron. <G>

Next column we continues with the intricacies of wiggling (or Why is hair everywhere but on her head?). So until then, find that doll, material and picture! Then we can continue together.