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My Daughter Tisha and Our Art

Catherine Jepson

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MY DAUGHTER TISHA AND OUR ART

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Date of Submission:

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For Tisha
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PREFACE

In most books, the I, or first person, is omitted; in this it will be retained; that, in respect to egotism, is the main difference. We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking. I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience. Moreover, I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men's lives . . . .1

INTRODUCTION

"The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the possibilities of the tapestry and of the stuffed appliquéd form using topical subjects (those referring to the topics of the day or place) in a progressive, sequential series."

The above statement is the original proposal for my creative thesis. This written thesis is not intended as a justification or a support for the creative thesis per se. My creative work has always, no matter what media, been a study in color and shapes. The subject matter is usually whimsical, playful, childlike, genre, using complementary colors and clear edges. The subject matter is all imaginary and at times it is drawn from the real. I strongly feel that the validity of a piece is not decided by whether or not it makes a philosophical or social comment on the state of the world or its people. I feel a piece can be just as valid if it is simply a strong color and design statement. Oftentimes with my work people read into it all sorts of noble, philosophical, social commentaries which could logically fit into or be the piece's raison d'être. This is not the case. These ideas are all good to discuss and perhaps it is good that my work stimulates such a discussion, or thought, but that is something which occurs after the fact and not before. Mine is "art for art's sake."

The pieces all have a freedom. They are not restrictive. The way I work is to reach conclusions rapidly: to conceive an idea and to see it finished soon thereafter. To spend hours and days sketching,
resketching, revising, building a mock-up, is for me a waste of creative energies I would rather put into the piece itself. To make an idea sketch is a good and valid exercise. However, the piece itself will be done in a different media, at a different moment, and will, out of necessity, not be a duplicate of the sketch. If it were, there would be no point in doing the piece twice. Creative freedom is a necessity in my work and for my mind. A sketch is a reminder only, not a measuring stick. To grow with the idea is important.

I have been strongly influenced by Bonnard, Chagall, Miro, and Matisse, as well as Peruvian, Mexican, and other Latin American art, especially folk art. This influence is especially strong on the level of color, shape, and form as well as in the whimsical, childlike approach. My work reflects my personality, my thoughts, my outlook on life. Friends have commented on the way I often live in an illusionary, imaginary, childlike world. To a certain extent this is true. However, I am also realistic and down-to-earth. This dualism can be seen at times through the color usage, subjects and/or shapes which I use. My work is simple and obvious, nothing to deceive the observer, nothing to add. Our house and our life is full of colors, shapes, things to feel, and other sensual and visual stimulants--my work reflects this. To spend any more time discussing my work is, to me, irrelevant, for if the work cannot stand alone to be enjoyed or not enjoyed emotionally and sensually without words and comments, it is not successful. I must point out here that success for an "artist or craftsman or artist/craftsman" is not always to be measured by the finished piece. Sometimes the learning process is by far more important.

My daughter, Tisha, is five years old. During her life, she, more than any other single individual, has influenced me and my work. She has
done this in a very subtle, inevitable, natural way. Our ideas have meshed and synthesized in often amazing and surprising ways. Her ideas and creative efforts have also, inevitably, been deeply influenced by me. It is for this reason that I am devoting this thesis largely to her and to her influence on me and mine on her.
CHAPTER I

TISHA'S ART AND MINE

Tisha, as any child, has a unique, unadult way of viewing the world, of thinking and expressing her ideas. Her stories in general tend to be more original, imaginary or "pretend" than do those of most adults, who no longer create their own stories or fantasies.

A child's way of seeing the world is in some ways more realistic than a photograph. A child's work tends to portray the emotional level of his world or how he wishes his world to be. Color choices tend to be vibrant and raw. Lines are carefully placed and quickly finished. Ask almost any child about his work (without asking "What is it?") and a long, intricately involved, intriguing story will generally unfold. The wise parent or teacher can use these tales in teaching as individualized books made with and for the child. The child can learn to read using these personal, meaningful stories instead of the generalized, depersonalized "Dick, Jane, Spot" readers which are unfortunately still used to a great extent. This procedure is, in fact, rather like that developed by Sylvia Ashton-Warner in her organic learning/teaching.

Sylvia Ashton-Warner, author of Teacher and Spinster, when teaching Maori children in New Zealand, developed her idea of organic learning and wrote the book Teacher. Learning "organically" means that each person learns what is personally meaningful to him or her.
The concept was developed as an "indispensable step in integration"² from the Maori world to that of the European, from the inner to the outer world. "Life as a whole is too complicated to teach to children. The minute it is cut up they can understand it, but you are liable to kill it in cutting it up."³

Sylvia Ashton-Warner explains her working theory best in a quote from Spinster, which she also used as her introduction to Teacher:

What a dangerous activity reading is; teaching is. All this plastering on of foreign stuff. Why plaster on at all when there's so much inside already? So much locked in? If only I could get it out and use it as working material. And not draw it out either. If I had a light enough touch it would just come out under its own volcanic power. And psychic power, I read in bed this morning, is greater than any other power in the world. What an exciting and frightening business it would be: even that which squeezes through now is amazing enough. In the safety of the world behind my eyes, where the inspector shade cannot see, I picture the infant room as one widening crater, loud with the sound of erupting creativity. Every subject somehow in a creative vent. What wonderful design of movement and mood! What lovely behaviour of silksack clouds!

An organic design. A growing living changing design. The normal and healthful design. Unsentimental and merciless and shockingly beautiful.⁴

After prolonged exposure to Tisha and her work, I tend to view our work much in the same way that Tisha does. It is hard to say point-blank who has influenced whom and how this influencing took place. It is apparent, however, that it has occurred to both of us. My creative work is childlike (in fact, it always has been) in form, color, and frequently in concept. I like to create a piece rapidly. To bother doing sketches, models, mock-ups, is to me a waste of creative energies better saved to use in the project itself. An original idea sketch and a personal or interpersonal discussion of what I want to

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³Ibid., 51. ⁴Ibid., 14.
accomplish helps. For me to build a mock-up serves no purpose but to see what the end result will look like. If I know that, there is no point in doing the thing again. Part of the fun, the mystery, of working with fibers and related media is the constant evolution of a piece. Constant revisions while constructing the piece are necessary for me, and the idea evolves, expands, changes, and finally, but not always, solidifies. Sometimes this process is much more important than having a finished "product." More is learned by the one who constantly experiments with ideas, and perhaps fails in some aspect each time, than by the one who gets an idea and solves it without evolving, growing, creating more than the original idea. One may end up with a shiny, slick, polished-looking piece. But is that the important part? I believe for the creative student it should not be, though out of necessity it may be and often is for the artist/craftsman. If one grows with each idea as a student or apprentice, successfully or unsuccessfully, one will be better able to handle each new idea as a producing craftsman. As Jacques Cousteau so recently said: "Man's curiosity is irresistible and it is its own justification."

My color choices are raw, acid, complementary colors which often tend to fight with one another. At other times the colors are so "against" one another that they become quiet. Colors and shapes are most important for me in my work. I play with them until I am satisfied with a result. I do my work for fun, for enjoyment. It is all pretend, imaginary, childlike. To impose upon it big, meaningful, philosophical purposes or ideas is not illogical as one looks at the end result. However, such purposes or ideas are results, not reasons. I do not, as a rule, think about social or philosophical justifications for my work as I do it. Or if I do, these justifications are only
important in my relation with the idea or the piece.

Tisha works in a consistent manner also. She gets an idea and, if at all possible (and it usually is, since we always have at least magic markers, paper, pencils and pens with us), she starts to relate it visually or verbally, or both. Her idea is to relate a story or an idea. This is sometimes expanded upon as she works, using elaborate detail and color work.

It is a beautiful thing to see the natural knowledge and use of color, shape, detail and design of a child before the adult world greatly influences and infringes upon his natural abilities.

I feel it is important in bringing up and educating children to give them much creative and intellectual freedom. To raise the child in a non-coercive, to a certain extent child-oriented, creative, imaginative world, is important for both his or her physical and intellectual growth. I feel that the tools, toys, games or learning devices around the child need not be an end in themselves. If the child uses these devices in order to gain a certain end result, or if the child has to think to make them work, they are more valuable and will certainly be of interest for a longer period of time. A toy which is too big or too complex for a child is not a toy, either good or bad. As one of the children (age seven) I had in a class last year at Randolph School in Wappingers Falls, New York, said: "I want a toy I can play with--not one that plays with me."
CHAPTER II

THE TEACHER'S ROLE

The most appropriate way I can describe my influence on Tisha is to relate several examples. If, for example, Tisha has a technical problem, such as not being able to figure out how to keep the cape on a Little Red Riding Hood finger puppet which she is constructing, I show her how to tack down the cape at the temples of the head, by sewing, so the cape forms a sort of hat. Or, if she cannot figure out why the handle of her clay egg basket keeps falling off, a simple discussion of how to smooth the clay so the handle and the basket become one unit solves the problem. If she is bored (a rare occurrence at our house), I make a few suggestions: for example, dictate a story to me about or paint a picture story about yourself as a fairy princess or an evil witch or a pantil-williken who floated away by accident, or a gruffumbly who swallowed a grizzlethorpe which continued to thrive inside him. Several times Tisha has been in bed for a couple of hours, and suddenly awakens to ask if she can please get up to draw a picture that she has been dreaming of before she forgets it. If she waited until morning she would forget. She only asks when it is important to her, so I let her get up for about ten to twenty minutes to draw or color her idea, and back to sleep she goes when she is finished. The ideas which come out of these sessions are very imaginative, perhaps a relating of a dream or story or an occurrence from the day. These sessions have
been well worthwhile for both of us. Tisha knows I feel her "work" is as important as mine is, and she does not abuse the privilege because she values it. When Tisha runs out of ideas, but wants to make something, we start telling stories. This usually sparks an idea. Or, if she is alone and needs an idea for play, we tell stories and she spends hours with an extension of our conversation. I guess I am encouraging her to live in a fantasy, imaginary world, as I often do myself. So many adults grow up with no ability to imagine or create that I feel it is important to keep stimulating creativity in a child and to continue as they grow up.

In our house the most consistent work has been done in drawing, painting, puppetry or dollatry.

No one ever works on anyone else's work unless we are doing a joint piece (for example, a mural or story), or unless there is a technical problem (such as how to thread one's needle, how to work a pen, how to open a jar). If the technical problem is about how to draw something, or how to draw something in a certain (different, unusual) pose or angle, I draw on my own piece of paper and destroy it when done, or we talk about the problem, what it is, and how to handle it. The latter is the better method, I find. Unfortunately there are "teachers" who still ask "What is it?" and who still hand a child a stencil to trace when asked how to draw something. As if the teacher or the paper or wood piece knows the more correct way to draw than does the individual. Usually when one is asked a "how-to" or a "how-does-it-go" question, what the child needs to do is talk over or question or remember how a thing or a being is built, or moves, or changes in appearance when moving. If a child is helped to examine his own question, he or she often answers
or solves his own problem. Another child (about age six) from Randolph School, was queried by a visitor, who asked the child: "What are you drawing; what is it?" The child explained, in a very matter-of-fact way: "How do I know until I have finished?" What a beautifully free and honest response!

The child's art is the origin of all art. For an adult to produce stencils for children to trace or fill in, or for an adult to laugh at a child's work as perhaps cute or wrong, or to ask "What is it?" is offensive to the child. Is it not presumptuous of the adult to assume that his art is the only "good," "correct" art?

Quality in children's art does not hinge on whether or not children are expressing their feelings; it depends instead on the quality of the feeling and the children's sensitivity to visual form in expressing their feelings. 5

My teaching experience is varied. I taught in a small, progressive, non-coercive, child-oriented school for 35 students ages 3 to 11--the Randolph School in Wappingers Falls, New York, for the 1969-1970 school year. At the same time I taught experimental art classes to children at the Garrison Art Center in Garrison, New York. Both places had a similar atmosphere, and consisted oftentimes of the same, or the same types, of persons. This year (1970-1971) I have had, almost every day, from 2 to 15 children visit our apartment. They range in age from 3 to 9, and they seem to enjoy the atmosphere here. They all appear voluntarily. Most of them do little art work at home; in fact, several do not even have crayons and paper available to them at home. Here, I turn them loose in the dining room with huge pieces of paper, various drawing, painting or collage scraps, and paste. Other days we build

castles, trucks, imaginary animals, finger puppets or hand puppets. They all get to keep what they make; however, a lot of them have asked me to hang up their work alongside Tisha's, the most frequent reason being that I respect and like their work and at home their work is restricted to their rooms. At our apartment it is all over, alongside adult work; therefore, it is held in the same regard. I also never ask "What is it?" nor do I ever try to impose my own visual images on their work.

There have been several interesting occurrences. One involved a friend of mine who is six years old. When he first started coming over here he would not draw anything. He said he did not know how to draw, and that he wanted me to draw everything for him. As I mentioned before, I do not believe in showing anyone how to draw anything. So we talked about things which interested him and what they look like. Ever since then he has been doing very complex, sophisticated drawings of race cars and dragsters. Another little boy, age six or seven, comes over, never to draw, paint or work with any other "media." He simply (perhaps not so simply) wants to build with blocks. The structures he builds are so complex, so intricate, that it is astounding. He needs little stimulation except for the materials and a place where he can do what he wants. At home he says he is not allowed to "make a mess," so he comes over here to do it.

At Garrison Art Center, the children were those of artists or of people involved in art in some way. At Randolph School the parents were all concerned about the education of their children, and about the people involved with the education of their children.

In general, the homes from which these children came were all well-equipped, or at least adequately so, with art media for the children.
The main problem here was acceptance of the children's work, on a par with adult work. Sometimes the younger "artists" would feel their work was not as "good," or as "successful," as that of an adult. I feel that it is important for each individual to feel his or her worth, that each person's work is as valid as any other person's, as long as it is honestly and conscientiously done. Each individual sees the world in a different, very personal way. Therefore, one person's expression of this is as valid as the next person's, and each individual is the only one who can portray what he sees or feels; no one else can do it for him.

Children are innately honest, and they expect you to be the same way . . . . They won't be afraid to love someone . . . . Children should find things out for themselves . . . . A child shouldn't have to take on the tastes and ideas of grown-ups . . . . In a good home the children and the parents have equal rights. In a bad home either the children have all the rights or the parents have all the rights.6

Learning for one's own sake, to meet one's own criterion of success, was what made learning satisfying to the young child. The young silently ask: "Help me to do it myself."7

The imagination of an individual is a unique phenomenon and is very personal. It is often present only in youngsters and in rare instances throughout one's lifetime. "There is a delicate fascination in 'let's pretend' unknown in any form of materialism."8

Self-absorption is necessary for such a game; this is happily a universally shared trait of childhood, and is one of its chief charms. Many children live with a few favorite toys in a little world of their own; the concrete figures of parents and attendants, and the real environment, either grouping entirely separate from


the imagined figures of the story world, or being made to figure in it, in subservience and masquerade. An imaginative boy, engrossed in a cabman game, dismounted from his box to obey some small command of his nurse, and resumed the reins, explaining to his make-believe fare that he had to attend to a private affair connected with his home; the real and imaginary world thus held their course in his mind, side by side, without infringing on each other's rights, for in the delicious irrelevancy of the child mind, realism and romance are not necessarily at war. 9

Happy is the man or woman who has the gift of imagination, the heart and fancy of the child.

It is only the dull child, like the dull adult, who needs an elaborate toy to amuse him, for he himself cannot supply details which are lacking. Everything must be seen and touched, or it is not there, nor can he understand that beauties unattainable, are in the land of make-believe, for they must exist in the mind of the player. Cinderella makes her triumphant progress in a gilded coach dressed in silks and satins, even though the old doll that represents her might be called a battered specimen, and her coach bears visible marks of its original use as a soap box, while the splendid charger that is bearing the Black Prince so nobly into action, in the mind of its owner, has only three legs to stand upon, and his royal master is unable to sit upright.

But if the joys of imagination with regard to toys are great, so the terrors are equally vivid—the tin lizard becomes a dragon belching forth flames, yawning chasms must be bridged and mountains climbed before the soldiers can storm the fort. The savage who peoples the forest and rocky places with terrible gods is closely in line with the child of facile imagination, whose brain has been modified by a thousand generations of progress, for in the child mind, as in the mind of primitive man, there is a divine irrelevancy which leaves no room for logic, in the peopling of the world. 10

Tisha, better than I, can explain this idea with a story written by her and dictated to me. The story was written on the side of a very large and detailed drawing of a large "bust" of Tisha visiting the zoo, which is seen above her and which is smaller—because of the distance it is behind her. (See the sketch of the drawing in the photograph and illustration section which follows.) The story is entitled "The Zoo," and was written after her school visited the zoo and she ate a "blow-pop" for the first time:

9Tbid., 2-3. 10Tbid.
I am Tisha, I live with the lions. I live in the whole zoo, if you understand. Do you know that the zoo man says: "I have a friend animal (elephant) who lives in the forest and she does not have any friends, except for one little tiger."

The wind is blowing outside and I am very scared that I will blow away. I went into my house to be safe and the animals went with me because I let them out. The zoo keeper was very scared of the lions and he ran away, so I am now the zoo girl and I am very glad. So forevermore I shall have my own friends and I shall be happy.

The string is rolling over and the string will never come back unless I pull it. But, it is all right because the zoo keeper is dead. My glasses cannot blow away because they are tied on. I went to a store on a nice summery day to replace my lost glasses. "How much are glasses?" "Ninety-nine cents." "That is too much! Don't you have any others? Can't I use a penny or a dime?" My mommy is dead. She is in Iowa. My pencil is out of lead. I am "skipping to my Lou my darling." Everyone says my pictures are beautiful. Lollipops are sure good, only when I eat them. But, I will say "no thank you" for the bubblegum.

As the Rockman said to Obleo: "You see what you want to see, you hear what you want to hear."11

CHAPTER III

DOLLS AND FANTASY

Acting plays an important role for us. It allows whoever is involved to take on an imaginary, pretend, dream quality, and for the period of play the child really is something or someone else. I feel this ability is important and should be developed. It not only allows the individual to step out of himself or herself, but it allows the player to understand another character "from the inside."

There is a book called A Is for Annabelle by Tasha Tudor. We have spent many hours pretending Tisha was Annabelle, and trying to remember what each letter of the alphabet stood for in Annabelle's Victorian doll's wardrobe. Annabelle's, and most other Victorian dolls, and dolls of the 1800's and early 1900's, were constructed using a variety of materials. Until molds for latex and plastic and rubber were available, the head was usually made of papier-mâché, wood, china, or wax. Some dolls were made of fabric or cornhusk. The bodies were composed of kidskin (stuffed with various fillings--mostly fibrous or sawdust), or of leather, fabric, wood, or with certain parts made of metal, wood, or ceramic, and jointed in various ways (strips of cloth, wire, or wood).

The Victorian era in dolls fascinates me because of the analogies possible between the literature, life styles, morals, dolls and education of the times as compared to those of today. During the Victorian
times, people were stiff, formal, proper, girdled (therefore constricted physically), fearful of sex, prudish, children spoke only if spoken to in the presence of adults, and there appears to have been a female dominance even though women had not "gained" some of their equal rights as yet. The dolls of this time were most often built with fragile china heads, were stiff and formal, were not play toys, were built for adult pleasure, were fancy, close to human resemblance, individual (therefore often having different personalities), and the play carried on was built around—not with—the doll because of its fragility. This latter factor in some ways inhibited creative play or put a larger burden on the child in his ability to fantasize and to carry out these fantasies. I often wonder if these dolls were not really adult dolls, made more for the visual pleasure of the adult than to satisfy the child's needs and desires.

The dolls of today (since latex molds were created and non-breakable dolls could be mass manufactured) are less personalized, more generalized characterizations of the average child or adult—if there is indeed such a thing. In some ways this is good, since it allows the doll to fit into any character or situation. The dolls tend to be stereotyped, sexed by clothing rather than by anatomy, often with glamorous wardrobes. The dolls which urinate, cry, or talk bother me especially. The speech is inaudible, and the doll never says anything particularly relevant to any certain child; and it urinates from the middle of its back, the belly button, or some other equally misplaced area, which could tend to confuse a child about his or her physical make-up.

Our family has, for generations, sung the following song around our family bonfire at Otsego Lake, Michigan. It could mean that boys
and girls alike have a desire (need?) to play with dolls, or pretend through doll play:

My mommy told me that she would buy me  
A rubber dolly, if I be goody,  
Now don't you tell her that I'm a feller,  
Or she won't buy me my rubber dolly.

Our culture is—and has historically been—wrapped up in the educational process of teaching boys to play with trucks, cars, guns, and blocks; and of teaching boys not to cry, to be competitive and aggressive, and to protect themselves, physically if necessary. The girls, however, have the pleasure of being able to cry, to be outwardly free in the expression of their emotions, to play with dolls, to pretend with dolls, and to be peaceful (if they choose) with one another.

In a free, progressive environment, where the value system is different and each individual is equally respected:

The kids have a tremendous amount of tolerance for each other. Say a kid goes up to Fred and hits him. Fred wouldn't go after him. He may want to, but he won't do it because he knows or has come to realize who this kid is, what his needs are to do this type of hitting. And even if Fred wanted to beat the . . . out of him, he wouldn't do it because it wouldn't solve anything and Fred knows it.  

Basically, the best environment is one that has the maximum amount of freedom, the only restrictions being those that involve safety and respect for property and respect for people. In lots of ways, this is kind of an extension of what happens with infants . . . it's the philosophy of parents toward their children up to school age. That's the way kids learn how to talk and how to walk, and they're allowed to follow their own natural curiosity all of these first five years.  

People should feel good about what they do every day. They have to learn to tap their own fantasy lives, to learn to get along well with other people. In other words, learn how to build

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a community based on love and human values, and based on a sharing of the earth, the plants and animals, with other people.14

Tapping this fantasy life as portrayed by the dolls produced in Latin America (Peru, Guatemala, Venezuela, and Brazil) has been especially interesting to me.

I am sure many human ills are present in the Latin American society, but artistic integrity and ability are somehow more generally preserved in the indigenous populations instead of being reserved, as in our country and other Western cultures, for the precious few, the elitist minority.

The Latin American dolls mentioned above (see illustrations also) are made of fabric, plaster, clay, bread and sugar, papier-mâché, or wood. They are non-movable for the most part, yet often not so highly stylized as to inhibit one's imagination. The colors used are bright and gay, the forms are free and flowing, and generally give one a happy, cheerful feeling. The forms appear unfinished, yet very strong and personal.

These dolls, much like my work, seem to have evolved or happened. The ideas appear to have changed in the process of being made, and the ideas expanded until a final solution was reached. The dolls were:...

... formed by craftsmen in that part of our hemisphere where the Iberian culture fused with the great indigenous civilization that already existed there. This fusion gives us the culture of Latin America.

Today these toys and other decorative objects communicate to us the powerful spirit of an unusual and highly imaginative people. For the most part they are the expression of naïve and unsophisticated people who have lived close to the earth and created wondrous fantasies out of the simplest materials. The objects communicate directness, simplicity, and firm spiritual beliefs, as well as humor, whimsy, tragedy, and love.

Wisdom and gratitude demand that we acknowledge their message, which comes to us so vividly out of the past, appealing to the children within us and in turn to our children. As we look at these enchanting toys and figures we are invited to translate their meaning into the terms of our own experience—and to attempt to create customs and forms that are just as significant, poetic, and valid.  

Today, doll makers such as Lenore Davis, Carol Anthony, Carol Ann Marsch, M. Nelson Hooton, or Michael Learned have definite approaches to their work, which I believe is important. These attitudes and approaches are well-described below by Jean Ray Laury:

Though doll makers do not take their creations over-seriously, this is not to say that doll makers are not serious about their work. They do not engage in discussions of aesthetic attributes, but instead let their creations speak for themselves. It is the human quality of the dolls, with which we identify, that makes us laugh at their pompousness or smile at their being so full of our own conceits and inadequacies. We see ourselves and must laugh. They put us in perspective.

There is a vital interest in doll making today. It is an area still being explored, but the possibilities already discovered prove its worth as an artistic medium. Dolls seem to be particularly suited as deflators of human self-assurance. Perhaps their greatest value is in their ability to make us laugh and enjoy our own faults and foibles.  

One of the standard funny dolls is the clown, especially the circus clown. During the past several years I have attended several circuses. I have been impressed especially by the clowns and their position in the circus. Clowns are the "top doll" in this animated fantasy of dolls for children and those who have a childlike heart. Clowns are generally either silly or sad, funny or ridiculous. Their painted faces either hide or cover up the real faces. Their clothes are designed to make people laugh, as are their antics. In saying that the clown is the top doll of the circus, I mean that he is the most

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constant character of a circus; he is in the spotlight while other acts are getting ready or getting into the arena. He holds the circus together. If he (or she) is a "good" clown, he is often the most remembered part of the circus. As quoted above, "... their greatest value is in their ability to make us laugh and enjoy our own faults and foibles." ¹⁷

Doll making is as expressive a medium as any other in the arts. The materials are so common and the methods so customary that it is easy to overlook the extremely perceptive and provocative comments made by doll makers. They produce intuitively, and are totally absorbed in their work. There is often an intense personal involvement without concern for public acceptance or popular opinion. Therefore, in contrast to much contemporary painting or sculpture, few dolls are made for public galleries or exhibitions, but doll making does provide one more means through which we can offer an individual viewpoint on the world about us. ¹⁸

This last comment is succinct and perceptive. The following quotations from Kahlil Gibran's Prophet should also be included as further expansion of the preceding:

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, Speak to us of Children.
And he said:
Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

¹⁷Ibid. ¹⁸Ibid., 135.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also  
the bow that is stable.19

Then said a teacher, Speak to us of Teaching.  
And he said:  
No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies  
half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.  
The teacher who wals in the shadow of the temple, among  
his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and  
his lovingness.  
If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house  
of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.  
The astronomer may speak to you of his understanding of  
space, but he cannot give you the ear which arrests the rhythm nor  
the voice that echoes it.  
And he who is versed in the science of numbers can tell of  
the regions of weight and measure, but he cannot conduct you thither.  
For the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man.  
And even as each one of you stands alone in God's knowledge,  
so must each one of you be alone in his knowledge of God and in  
his understanding of the earth.20


20Ibid., 56.
"The red volkswagen was walking along once and died. Then he woke up again. He fell very sleepy and went to sleep. When he woke up flowers were growing on him! What a beautiful sight! 'I'm growing beautiful!' he said."
"There was once a little girl and it was windy outside. In front of her is a family of ducks in the water. The summer sun is shining. Her mother is a witch. She cast a spell and the girl lives on a glass hill now until a prince comes to climb the hill and take her away to his castle."
MY WORK
AND SOME SOURCES OF INSPIRATION
FOR TISHA AND ME
HOW TO TELL CORN FAIRIES IF YOU SEE 'EM

by Carl Sandburg

"If you have ever watched the little corn begin to march across the black lands and then slowly change to big corn and go marching on from the little corn moon of summer to the big corn harvest moon of autumn, then you must have guessed who it is that helps the corn come along. It is the corn fairies. Leave out the corn fairies and there wouldn't be any corn.

All children know this. All boys and girls know that corn is no good unless there are corn fairies.

Have you ever stood in Illinois or Iowa and watched the late summer wind or the early fall wind running across a big cornfield? It looks as if a big, long blanket were being spread out for dancers to come and dance on. If you look close and if you listen close you can see the corn fairies come dancing and singing—sometimes. If it is a wild day and a hot sun is pouring down while a cool north wind blows—and this happens sometimes—then you will be sure to see thousands of corn fairies marching and countermarching in mocking grand marches over the big, long blanket of green and silver. Then too they sing, only you must listen with your littlest and newest ears if you wish to hear their singing. They sing soft songs that go pla-sizzy pla-sizzy-sizzy, and each song is softer than an eye wink, softer than a Nebraska baby's thumb.

And Spink, who is a little girl living in the same house with the man writing this story, and Skabootch, who is another little girl in the same house—both Spink and Skabootch are asking the
question, "How can we tell corn fairies if we see 'em? If we meet a corn fairy how will we know it?" And this is the explanation the man gave to Spink who is of more years than Skabootch and to Skabootch who is younger than Spink:

All corn fairies wear overalls. They work hard, the corn fairies, and they are proud. The reason they are proud is because they work so hard. And the reason they work so hard is because they have they have overalls.

But understand this. The overalls are corn gold cloth, woven from leaves of ripe corn mixed with ripe October corn silk. In the first week of the harvest moon coming up red and changing to yellow and silver the corn fairies sit by thousands between the corn rows weaving and stitching the clothes they have to wear next winter, next spring, next summer.

They sit cross-legged when they sew. And it is a law among them each one must point the big toe at the moon while sewing the harvest moon clothes. When the moon comes up red as blood early in the evening they point their big toes slanting toward the east. Then towards midnight when the moon is yellow and half way up the sky their big toes are only half slanted as they sit cross-legged sewing. And after midnight when the moon sails its silver disk high overhead and toward the west, then the corn fairies sit sewing with their big toes pointed nearly straight up.

If it is a cool night and looks like a frost, then the laughter of the corn fairies is something worth seeing. All the time they sit sewing their next year clothes they are laughing. It is not a law they have to laugh. They laugh because they are half-tickled
and glad because it is a good corn year.

And whenever the corn fairies laugh then the laugh comes out of the mouth like a thin gold frost. If you should be lucky enough to see a thousand corn fairies sitting between the corn rows and all of them laughing, you would laugh with wonder yourself to see the gold frost coming from their mouths while they laughed.

Travelers who have traveled far, and seen many things, say that if you know the corn fairies with a real knowledge you can always tell by the stitches in their clothes what state they are from.

In Illinois the corn fairies stitch fifteen stitches of ripe corn sild across the woven corn leaf cloth. In Iowa they stitch sixteen stitches, in Nebraska seventeen, and the farther west you go the more corn silk stitches the corn fairies have in the corn cloth clothes they wear.

In Minnesota one year there were fairies with a blue sash of corn-flowers across the breast. In the Dakotas the same year all the fairies wore pumpkin-flower neckties, yellow four-in-hands and yellow ascots. And in one strange year it happened in both the states of Ohio and Texas the corn fairies wore little wristlets of white morning glories.

The traveler who heard about this asked many questions and found out the reason why that year the corn fairies wore little wristlets of white morning glories. He said, "Whenever fairies are sad they wear white. And this year, which was long ago, was the year men were tearing down all the old zigzag rail fences. Now those old zigzag rail fences were beautiful for the fairies because
a hundred fairies could sit on one rail and thousands and thousands of them could sit on the zigzags and sing pla-sizzy pla-sizzy, softer than an eye-wink, softer than a baby's thumb, all on a moonlight summer night. And they found out that year was going to be the last year of the zigzag rail fences. It made them sorry and sad, and when they are sorry and sad they wear white. So they picked the wonderful white morning glories running along the zigzag rail fences and made them into little wristlets and wore those wristlets the next year to show they were sorry and sad."

Of course, all this helps you to know how the corn fairies look in the evening, the night time and the moonlight. Now we shall see how they look in the day time.

In the day time the corn fairies have their overalls of corn gold cloth on. And they walk among the corn rows and climb the corn stalks and fix things in the leaves and stalks and ears of the corn. They help it to grow.

Each one carries on the left shoulder a mouse brush to brush away the field mice. And over the right shoulder each one has a cricket broom to sweep away the crickets. The brush is a whisk brish to brush away mice that get foolish. And the broom is to sweep away crickets that get foolish.

Around the middle of each corn fairy is a yellow-belly belt. And stuck in this belt is a purple moon shaft hammer. Whenever the wind blows strong and nearly blows the corn cown, then the fairies run out and take their purple moon shaft hammers out of their yellow-belly belts and nail down nails to keep the corn from blowing down. Whe a rain storm is blowing up terrible and driving
all kinds of terribles across the corn field, then you can be sure of one thing. Running like the wind among the corn rows are the fairies, jerking their purple moon shaft hammers out of their belts and nailing nails down to keep the corn standing up so it will grow and be ripe and beautiful when the harvest moon comes again in the fall.

Spink and Skabootch ask where the corn fairies get the nails. The answer to Spink and Skabootch is, "Next week you will learn all about where the corn fairies get the nails to nail down the corn if you will keep your faces washed and your ears washed till next week."

And the next time you stand watching a big cornfield in late summer or early fall, when the wind is running across the green and silver, listen with your littlest and newest ears. Maybe you will hear the corn fairies going pla-sizzy pla-sizzy-sizzy, softer than an eye wink, softer than a Nebraska baby's thumb."
LANDSCAPE #1 - ORANGE TRUCK #1
LANDSCAPE #3 - STOP SIGN
LANDSCAPE #4 - ORANGE TRUCK #2
LANDSCAPE #5 - MILK TRUCK
LANDSCAPE #5 - MILK TRUCK
LANDSCAPE #6 - OBLEO AND ARROW
LANDSCAPE #7 - FAMILY
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