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August 2009

ADELE SCIORTINO'S
Gift Celebrates
**Doll Crafter's
25th Anniversary**

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The Gift

By Adele Sciortino, Figurative Artist

This gorgeous art doll, featuring beautiful color combinations and textures, was created for *Doll Crafter* in celebration of the magazine's 25th anniversary.

The Gift was created especially to celebrate *Doll Crafter's* 25th anniversary. It was fashioned as a figurative art fantasy with the thought of having a special earthling as a courier of memorable gifts. Not a fairy, not a creature, not an animal, but a combination of all. Something like a cicada but lovelier, more like a wood nymph, having enlarged wings to carry heavy gifts.

I am often asked, "How do you come up with your ideas?" With this particular piece I wanted to challenge myself to make something totally different than what I usually conjure up. I had this headdress in mind for awhile, and this seemed like a good time to try it out because the design reminded me of antennae on an insect.

Thus began my journey of creativity. Always needing a challenge and trying to incorporate all the different techniques I have learned over the years, it now becomes the center of my focus.

I was very surprised with my results when everything came together. I love researching and hunting for those special pieces that help make the art piece

more complete. The silver gift boxes and miniature *Doll Crafter & Costuming* magazines were the perfect touch to complete the overall theme.

Armature

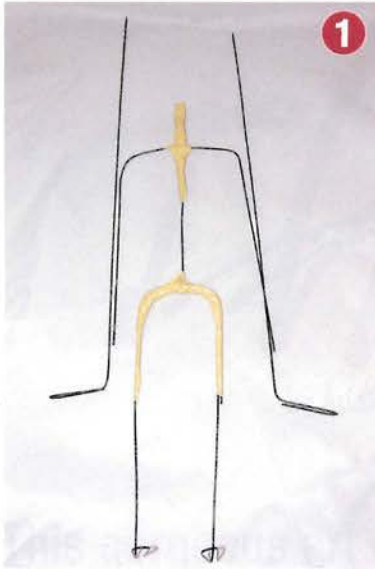
An armature, as in sculpture, is the art of producing three-dimensional representations of a natural or imagined form. As in construction, an armature becomes the foundation of the image and must be well built to support the weight of the fabric, embellishments, props or headdress.

I started out by using a very basic 16-gauge floral wire armature (photo 1). If creating a standing piece, a heavier gauge wire is needed to support the weight. I made all the necessary adjustments to achieve the right proportions I had in mind and posed it into the shape I wanted (the figure is 11 inches sitting).

Since it was my fantasy, I wanted an exaggerated and elongated torso, with matching long arms, legs and neck. You will have to experiment with this part and take into consideration how heavy the headdress will be or what kinds of props the figure will carry.







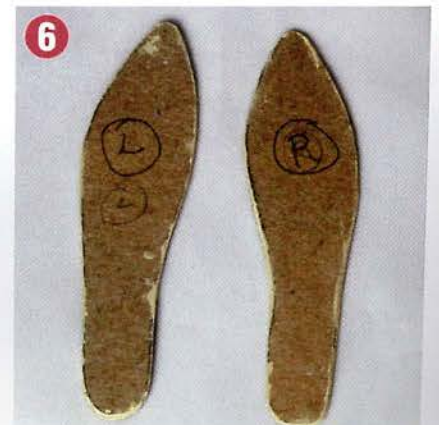
After wrapping masking tape around the wire and shaping the body with aluminum foil (2 and 3), I wrapped 1-inch-wide cotton batting strips around the body (4). To determine which side of the batting requires the glue, hold one end and pull gently in order for it to curl; depending on which way the strip curls, that is the side that gets glued. Wrap the strips of batting snugly; most often, stitches should be taken to secure the batting in place.

I extended the wire to give the feet and slippers the support they required. Now I had the extra support to start the molding process. Then I added aluminum foil to create the shape of the slippers (5). This helps the feet from becoming too heavy.

I then sculpted them with two-part Aves Apoxie Sculpt. I drew a right and left sole of the slippers (6), which helped determine the length of the foot before I started sculpting. After the sculpting was completed, I made stockings from

fine mesh netting. Tip: Do not use nonstick aluminum foil because the masking tape will not adhere.

The slippers were made directly on the foot. I used velvet bias-cut ribbon for the upper part of the slipper and covered the bottom part with fabric to match the costume. I completed the design with handmade Mokuba Japanese ribbon flowers for the top of the slippers. I then added 3 mm Siam AB flat back Swarovski crystals to give it extra embellishment sparkle.



Head

The head is made from quilter sateen. It is a two-part construction design stuffed firmly to allow needle sculpting. The cloth hands are also made from quilter sateen and were constructed by attaching the thumb separately to give the hand a more realistic look.

The face was needle sculpted using a quilter's thread, creating the indentation of the eye, nose and mouth and skinned with another layer of fabric to hide the stitches. The fabric for the face and hands were conditioned, and Glimmer Mist was sprayed to give the image a flesh-like glow.

Before starting a face, I draw it with disappearing ink to make sure everything is in proportion, paying close attention to the width between the eyes. Even though this figure is depicting fantasy, there still needs to be some sort of balance on the facial features. I then paint the face with watercolor pencils, sealed with Krylon fixative. I inserted pipe cleaners for the fingers, making them articulate. The fingernails were created with Mod Podge and painted with flesh-color acrylics.

Wings

The wings, which are removable for easy transportation, were made with transparent acetate, painted with a combination of three Adirondack Alcohol Inks and blended to achieve the colors I wanted. I was extremely careful to be very light-handed with detailing the veins on the wings and not to cover or lose the effect of the transparency (7).

I painted both wings at the same time to maintain the identical look. To



identify the veins in the wings, I spread a bead of clear-drying glue, which became the basis for the adhesion of the microbeads. I always like to add some sort of vintage embellishments to my pieces, at which time I remembered I had these great vintage metal ornaments I could attach to the wings (8).

Costuming

Next came the costuming, which is my favorite part of the process. A great habit to get into is getting to know and using a color wheel. It provides a perfect blend of colors without stressing which colors to use.

I start out by working with one main color and then introduce two accent colors. I let the embellishments help add extra sparkle to make the costume come to life. Monochromatic colors (a one-color scheme) could also be used, as in *Madame Grey*.

I like using the CMYK color wheel because it gives me a wider range of colors to select from. This color wheel method of selecting colors stems back to my days of doing professional watercolors and, as such, has stuck in the memory bank forever. So I work with fabric colors as if I was using paints.



Experimenting with different colors and textures is the key.

Another important aspect of fabric selection is the scale of the fabric. When using any floral prints, I use the head proportion to determine if a print is small enough for the figure. For instance, if the head measures 2½ inches, the pattern should be smaller than the head size. It is an easy way to quickly see if you are on the right track before getting too attached to a floral fabric. If the floral design is bigger than the head, it is best not to use it because it will overpower the figure.

Everything in the costume was created with silk and velvet bias-cut ribbons and accented in hand-dyed ribbons. I selected the velvet hand-dyed ribbon because of

the scale, texture and width of the ribbon. Plus, I found the color worked well when adding touches of green.

When wrapping the main color, it is important to wrap evenly and tack it down, especially in the areas of the elbow and knees. Those are the stress areas, and the wrapping will come apart if it is not secured correctly.

You can bias-cut fabric to do your wrapping too, especially if it is a piece of fabric that complements the design. I decided to select ribbons because it was going to give me the look I was trying to achieve. This is not to say that using other fabrics will not give you the same look. Everything is experimental, and the main thing is to have fun through the process.

The headdress is made with hand-

pleated ribbons, which is also in scale with the figure. The antennas are made from fishing line, wrapped with metallic thread and wooden beads (9). It is important to test the glue when working with metallic threads and plastic because not all glues will adhere in the same fashion.

This was a long process, but with many rewards at the end. I wanted to create a sense of movement in the piece, and the bobbing of the antennas helped create this extra touch. I started out with three antennas and decided to try 15—very ambitious on my part since I was on such a tight deadline to deliver *The Gift*.

All decorative ribbon trims were hand-ruched and applied down the sides of the arms and around the wrists and

