

She makes dolls Grandma cuddled

Dolls are making a big come-back and porcelain dolls are at the top of the list. Until approximately 50 years ago every little girl cuddled a porcelain doll, but now it's the grown-ups who covet them.

Antique porcelain dolls are fetching big prices, and are being recommended as one collector's item which will keep pace with inflation.

The resurgence of interest in the peaches and cream complexioned dolls, with the eyes which close when put down to sleep, not only stirs memories in a lot of women, but has prompted at least some of them to reproduce what were toys in another era.

But toys they are not any more as the hobbyists not only make the dolls, but spend painstaking hours dressing them in the authentic costumes of their particular time. These too are being snapped up, but seldom as gifts for children.

June Lerch is one who has rediscovered the art of dollmaking and her fascination with them is reflected in the number and variety of dolls which surround her in her Dawson Crescent home. She is passing on

her knowledge and joy in the art to ten eager students at the moment. She also sells some but admits she does it reluctantly.

Twelve years she first tried her hand at ceramics and was hooked, eventually opening Juno's Ceramics on Armstrong Avenue, but lately China-painted porcelain dolls have become a major interest.

She does it all, starting from buying the mold and pouring the muddy looking mixture called slip into them. But the featureless faces have to have eye sockets cut in. If it's one of these appealing dolls with the half-open mouth, that little girl used to stick tiny baby's bottles in then that, too, must be cut out.

After firing in a very hot kiln for porcelain the head is polished with fine sandpaper, then those ruby lips and pink cheeks are painted on. After more firings for the china painted doll, the eyelashes are painted on, one by one. Sometimes this can take a whole afternoon.

After that these bright flirtatious eyes are set in first with a pliable wax, then with plaster of paris.

At this point the doll 'ain't got nobody," so a soft, composite or porcelain body, is added, depending on the era of the original doll. Most antique dolls had composition bodies. All June's dolls are exact reproductions of antique dolls, down to each item of clothing.

Antique dolls had a type of hallmark on the back of the neck to show who made it and June puts her initials and the year on her dolls so they cannot be passed off as antiques.

Most dolls are strung together with elastic and a hook and come in five or six pieces, including arms and legs. But some, such as the Shirley Temple doll, which was the apple of every child's eye when the little movie star was singing On the Good Ship Lollipop, and was dancing and crying her way into everyone's heart, comes in 17 pieces. This is due to ball joints in her arms and legs.

When the cascading curly wigs go on the doll is finished, and the time-consuming task of making the delicate dresses, cloaks and even little muffs begins.

The dollmaker becomes a scrounger as



June Lerch surrounded by her dolls. she searches for satins, silks, velvets and lace. Old costume jewellery becomes a bonanza for the tiny necklaces every well-dressed old-fashioned doll must wear. June's dolls are modelled primarily on French and German dolls from the 1880s to 1929, when porcelain dolls faded from the scene. But if she and others like her caught up in the rebirth of hand-painted china dolls have their way, they will come back to their former glory.

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At House Sol
Drenters' sculpture

Shizuye Takashima, Canadian painter and writer will hold an exhibition of her work at House Sol, starting this Saturday. Takashima, a Canadian citizen of Japanese descent, was evacuated from the west coast and interned in the interior during World War 2. Out of her experiences she wrote a book, entitled "A Child in Prison Camp," which has been called a moving documentary of our times.

Her paintings are in the collection of public museums such as the National Gallery in Ottawa, and the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto.

Sharing the exhibition with Takashima, is well-known local artist Andreas Drenters, who now lives in Rockwood Academy, the home of his late brother artist Yosef. He will exhibit 30 small and medium-sized pieces of sculpture made from found iron such as farm machinery.

Both artists will be at the gallery, 45 Charles St. Saturday November 10 from 2 until 6 p.m.

Household Hints
From Pauline McNally

Potatoes will bake more quickly if you cut off a very thin slice from each end before you place them in the oven. Oil the ends before baking.

A typewriter eraser removes black heel marks from a vinyl floor.

Old-fashioned brown soap is an excellent stain remover. Keep a bar near your washer; dampen and rub on stains before you load clothes in the washer. No need to rinse; regular cycle will take care of that.

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During Glen Williams' Bicentennial Celebration recently, Rick Berghammer brought a selection of his leather paintings to The Copper Kettle which will be on display there through the winter. He holds one titled "Golden Eagle". Berghammer is one of about four people in the world who do this kind of art work and he exhibits worldwide. He started developing his skills when he was about six years old. Since each picture takes 400-500 hours to complete he has only made about 40 so far. The leather is tooled and formed into shapes under heat and moisture.

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