



# The Art That I Breathe

BY BELINDA HOGAN

*You could say that art to Ksheyna Nightswood is like oxygen; the most essential part of her being and existence. Although she describes herself as often 'off with the fairies,' her beautiful and mysterious work literally takes her audience along on that fairy ride with her.*



Ksheyna lives in country Victoria which suits her personally and artistically. A rather private person, Ksheyna loves nothing else but to spend time in her home studio creating her clay-sculptured dolls, wings and bears. Ksheyna says the peacefulness of the countryside not only saved her after she suffered a devastating fall a number of years ago, it feeds her creativity.

"I love watching the wind and the Sylph as it moves through the trees. I have always loved art and making things," Ksheyna says. "About six years ago I fell backwards badly and broke both of my wrists. It was a frightening time for me, I was so afraid of losing the ability to draw and create. Since then my art has become more precious to me. When I am not sculpting or making fairy wings I can usually be found sitting in a not so out-

of-the-way place surrounded by sheets of paper and several of my handmade books drawing with the Fay."

Friends and family describe Ksheyna as gifted, an individual, determined and rebellious. Her teachers have described her as one of the most talented and interesting students they have ever taught. Her fascination with the world of fantasy developed at a very young age when her mother would read *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* to her before she went to bed at night. This opened up a whole world filled with creatures, elves and magic. Ksheyna says that although there are many sides to her, art has always been a part of her being.

As a firm believer in fairies, pixies and trolls, 'Who says they are mythical?' Ksheyna does have a soft spot for trolls, dryads and fauns. "Trolls are so earthy. I love their

wrinkled old faces and large noses. They can sometimes be frightening but also quite naive and sweet. I love how dryads are twined into the trees, they exude a sense of stillness and quiet beauty. Fauns are something else, I love their delicate hooves and horns. How they can be so very silent and restful, but become dark and fearsome all within one breath."

Ksheyna has always been artistic and has never taken any formal art classes to learn how to draw or paint other than in high school. "I love to sit and draw, sometimes I will paint. I sew some of my own clothes, I love to make corsets," she says. "I have made plush toys that our cats just love to bite and play with. I do felting and make fairy wings for dolls and bears, and dabble in bookbinding."

However, it was the discovery of artists Brian and Wendy Froud and



completely unique and one of a kind. It is amazing to see the dolls come to life, each has its own unique personality and opinion of how it will turn out,” Ksheyna says. “I never know how they will look till the very end. Their costumes are inspired by the fashions of the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, the ever-expanding world of fantasy and the very nature around me.”

Always in the mood to create, Ksheyna says she loves working with her own blend of polymer clay because it gives her dolls life. “They look so real, like they are about to take a step towards you. They look so soft, and the clay feels so very smooth to touch. I just love it,” she says.

When she starts on a new doll, Ksheyna grabs one of her sketchbooks and looks through it, stopping for anything that calls out to her. Although she may then get a hint of an idea when she begins her creative process, her dolls are an evolution and Ksheyna says she never quite knows how they will look until she has finished.

“I start with sculpting the head. I use handmade glass-like eyes in my

dolls, I make them myself, as I think they give a more otherworldly look than real glass eyes. After the head is sculpted and baked it is blushed. I find it easier to blush the face before I start sculpting the body, as sometimes it can really get in the way,” Ksheyna explains. “I then sculpt the body, arms and legs. Finally I will sculpt the hands and feet. Once the doll is finished baking I blush the body with Genesis paints and bake one last time.”

The dressing for each of Ksheyna’s dolls is very individualistic. The dolls’ clothing are commonly long gowns and corsets which are usually glued or stitched on. Ksheyna loves using silks, chiffons, organza, lace and cottons to dress her dolls. “I then add eyelashes to my dolls one by one; it is very time consuming but well worth it I think,” she explains. “The hair is glued on in small locks. I use lots of Tibetan lamb fur, I just love the look and feel of it. I have even started dyeing my own doll hair.”

Ksheyna is very spontaneous when she is creating her dolls, but she does adhere to one rule. “Clean up the mess from the last doll before

beginning the next one,” she says. “Out of all the things I do when creating my dolls, this is the one thing I do routinely. I am quite a messy worker, sometimes I can’t even see the floor through the fabrics and flowers.”

Ksheyna has now made more than 70 dolls and over the last couple of years has won a number of awards overseas. She sells her wonderful creations on her website and also has started to showcase her dolls in local galleries. Ksheyna hopes to continue to create, learn, build up her business and become a known artist in the field.

“My doll making motto is rather an odd one which is ‘even if I don’t know what I am doing, at least the fairies do!’” Ksheyna says. “When I started making art dolls, going from drawing to sculpture, being able to see them come to life and having them stand in front of me, actually standing there, it just fit. I have truly never been happier.”

*You can find out more about Ksheyna’s beautiful creations at [www.nightswood.com](http://www.nightswood.com)*