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Mini Teddy Hugs™

From Around The World



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Susan Quinlan Doll & Teddy Bear Museum & Library

by: **Susan Quinlan**

Looking back, I feel that many experiences throughout my life were actually aiming me direction of opening a museum, although I was unaware of it until recently. As a child I spent a great deal of time in the Cleveland Museum of Art where my father taught Saturday classes. I became very familiar with their collection and spent hours wandering through the galleries. Later I earned my MSLS and became a librarian, and also took archival training for two summers at Case Western Reserve. In addition I took bookbinding and conservation classes in Berkeley. All of these training experiences are useful today both for the museum collection and the attached library which has 10,000 books on dolls, doll houses (and miniatures), and teddy bears. It has additional books on puppets, costumes, and toys.

I was also a history major in college, and was fascinated by California history in particular. I took several classes in this area, and also was a docent at the California Historical Society in San Francisco for a number of years. I enjoyed giving tours there, and also had experience giving tours at the SFSU library. I thought it would make my museum more unique if I emphasized the work of California doll and teddy bear artists as well as California manufacturers. I say emphasized, because I also have many dolls and teddy bears by artists from around the United States and around the world.

I didn't begin to collect dolls until the late 1970s, when I joined a doll club in San Francisco. I was working as a librarian at San Francisco State University at the time. A friend and I tried to start a part-time business making doll clothes, but people were more interested in the dolls we also brought to sell at the shows and we decided to change our emphasis. As I began to collect dolls and then teddy bears, I became aware that they were so much more than toys. I began to appreciate the beauty of the different face molds, the quality of the sewing and fine costuming, and the various social and cultural aspects of life portrayed by the various dolls and bears.



(Click on picture to see larger image)

Princess & The Pea by Pauline Weir

At nearly the same time my sister became interested in dollhouse miniatures, and I went to many shows with her. I became fascinated by the wonderful small bears that I found at these shows, and began to purchase various examples. It wasn't long before I had quite a "mini hug" of small bears. Unfortunately at the time I had no idea that I would one day be putting them into a museum, and in many cases I was not as careful as I should have been about keeping the artists names with the bears. My collection of miniature bears and related accessories became so large, that my sister very kindly built me a teddy bear shop to house them. Today this shop, which I call "Hibearnia House Gift Shop" and which is run by Mr. and Mrs. O'Beara, is on display and is one of the favorite exhibits of many of my customers.



(Click on picture to see larger image)

Hibearnia House Gift Shop

I also continue my love of small teddies, and continue to add them to my collection. Today I have representations of bears by artists such as Mary Jo Sichak, Diana Ussery, Cheryl Moss, Debi Ortega, Loris Hancock, Paulette Svec, Pauline Weir, and many others. I have them spread throughout the displays, like little gems waiting to be discovered.



(Click on picture to see larger image)

Photo Safari by Diana Ussery

So far I have only been able to display a part of the collection. Some time in the near future I hope to add about 38 stand-alone cases which will allow me to display more items, and also to put on changing displays - perhaps two or three a year. I have also been putting together some presentations using the materials out of the library. I did a program on pop-up teddy bear books for the Teddy Bear Artist Invitational in 2007 and a presentation on Goldilocks and the three bears for them in 2008.