

Preview: The Artist Doll & Teddy Bear Convention

May 1-3, Philadelphia, Pa.

The Artist Doll & Teddy Bear Convention held in Philadelphia each year by the Susan Quinlan Doll & Teddy Bear Museum is always packed with unusual and fun activities. It starts with a registration package that includes limited-edition pins, available only to convention attendees, honoring leading doll and teddy bear artists. In 2013, doll artist Floyd Bell and bear artist Martha Burch were honored.

The two-day registration fee of \$195 includes six buffet meals, refreshments throughout the day, nightly cocktails, and all activities offered on Friday and Saturday. There are optional workshops on Thursday for which instructors may charge up to \$100 — and while the instructors receive 100% of their workshop fees, unlike many conventions, students get free buffet meals for Thursday included in their workshop registrations.

The workshops were as popular with collectors as with artists in 2013. Students learned to make one-of-a-kind (OOAK) vintage-style necklaces, top hats, suitcases, doll hands and bodies, wooden heads, entire bears, paper dolls, and much more. Workshop students, ranging from beginners to professionals, can show off their creations in Thursday's Gallery of Workshop Creations, the first of the convention's four gallery photo opportunities. There's no competition involved — just a chance for students to take pride in what they learned and accomplished that day and to share a fun experience with everyone at the show.

The convention officially kicks off Thursday evening with the excitement of previewing, judging, and buying signed OOAK artist dolls and bears entered in the show's two competitions: the Beverly Port Award for Excellence among the artist teddy bear entries and the Helen Bullard Award for Excellence among the artist doll entries. An open bar and the first of three buffet banquets round out the evening's entertainment, giving attendees the chance to catch up with friends since the last convention.

After a hearty buffet breakfast Friday morning, the Artist & Collector Market Place is available for anyone to sell, buy, and trade trims, material, furs, supplies, trinkets, and other items for designing, cre-

Right: A 12-inch seaman teddy made at Sharon Barron's 2013 workshop.



ating, and accessorizing their dolls and bears. Among the most unusual events at the convention are the special artist galleries that were added to the program for the first time in 2013. The purpose of these galleries is to motivate artists to try entirely new designs, materials, and techniques in order to find new and broader markets for their creations. There were two special galleries in 2013: a gallery of dolls made by bear artists and bears by doll artists, the idea of doll artist Deborah Pope; and the Funk & Junk Gallery, featuring dolls and teddy bears made from found items and junk that would otherwise be headed for the trash.

There will be four special galleries this year: One featuring ethnic creations; another dedicated to male subjects; the Period Piece gallery featuring dolls and teddies from the Middle Ages; and a gallery of OOAK signed artist doll and bear quilt patches. There is no judging in the special galleries; the artists enter simply for their own enjoyment.

In addition, all day Friday there will be concurrent tracks of presentations about four specific interests: collectors, artists, dolls, and teddy bears. Last year's sessions included "Creating Settings for Art Dolls" by Betsey Baker, "Making Paws for Effect" by Tami Eveslage, "Adding Movement to Cloth" by Mark Dennis, and "Share the Joys of Collecting Teddy Bears" by Terrie Stong. The highlight of Stong's session was surprising Susan Quinlan with "Me Too," her own dress-alike traveling bear designed and created by one of her favorite artists, Martha Burch. "Me Too" also received a



This Martha Burch commemorative pin was given to 2013 attendees.

miniature traveling bear called "Mini-Me." There were also one-on-one mentoring sessions for new doll and bear artists.

Possibly the most appreciated new addition to last year's show, which will return this year, was Create Your Own Shopping Guide. Each artist took less than a minute to explain what makes his or her pieces unique, special, and attractive to customers. Attendees received a "scorecard" listing each of the 125 artists exhibiting at the show by table number, so collectors could make notes on artists of special interest to them and make sure to visit their tables during the two hours of early access to the sales room.

Attendees are also given a third hour of early access to the sales room Saturday morning, before the general public is admitted. Raffle drawings are held at intervals throughout the day, with winners choosing from a selection of doll- and teddy bear-related prizes. The public and attendees alike enjoy free coffee, tea, and lemonade all day.

After the artists have packed up after the sale room hours, it's time for one last banquet and a chance to relive the convention by watching slides of all of the events and activities since early Thursday. The Beverly Port and Helen Bullard Awards for Excellence winners are announced after dinner. 🐾

Find out more about this year's convention at www.quinlanmuseum.com/convention



Above: Bear artist Diana Ussery displayed this creation in the the Dolls Made by Bear Artists Gallery



Left: Doll artist's Deborah Pope's creation for the Bears Made by Doll Artists Gallery.



Left: Maria Markovick made a bear from tree bark for the Funk and Junk Gallery.



Susan Quinlan (center) receives her travel bears "Me Too" and "Mini-Me" from creator Martha Burch (left).