

# The Story of ODACA

## Our Origins

The Original Doll Artist Council of America (ODACA) is a vibrant community of artists who create one-of-a-kind original dolls. Founded in 1976 in San Diego, California, by Bess Fantl and five fellow doll artists, the organization was established to promote, preserve, and encourage the art of original doll making.

Although members live many miles apart, they are united by a shared passion for dolls and the creative process of bringing them to life. Bess Fantl often expressed how proud she was to be associated with such talented artists whose dedication and spirit of sharing helped shape the organization. In many ways, ODACA truly is its members. Today, ODACA artists continue to share their dolls, techniques, and knowledge with collectors and fellow artists so that others may discover the joy and fulfillment that comes from this art form.

## Artist Membership

One of the most exciting aspects of ODACA is the diversity of its artists. Membership is open to skilled doll artists from a variety of artistic backgrounds through a juried application process that begins each year on December 1.

ODACA artists work in many styles and mediums, including porcelain, paper clay, polymer clay, cloth, felt, paper, wood, and wool. Many artists also combine materials in creative ways as they explore new possibilities in doll making. This diversity of techniques and artistic expression is part of what makes ODACA so unique and appealing to collectors and fellow artists alike. Additional membership information can be found at [ODACA.org](http://ODACA.org).

## Collegiality and Friendship

Creating one-of-a-kind dolls can be deeply rewarding, but it is often solitary work. Many artists spend long hours in their studios sculpting, painting, designing patterns, sewing costumes, creating wigs, and crafting the many details that bring a doll to life.

ODACA provides an important sense of community for artists who share this passion. Members enjoy exchanging ideas, sharing techniques, and seeing what others are creating. These interactions often lead to lively discussions, fresh inspiration, and lasting friendships.

The organization encourages communication through *Expressions*, the quarterly ODACA newsletter, as well as online meetings where artists share their skills and knowledge. Another highlight is the annual ODACA Day salesroom, where member artists display and sell their dolls.

## ODACA Day Luncheon - Our Premiere Event

The highlight of the ODACA year is the annual ODACA Day Luncheon, held during the United Federation of Doll Clubs (UFDC) Convention. This festive ticketed event, usually held in July, is open to convention attendees and the public and has become a favorite tradition among collectors and artists.

The luncheon features an inspiring program, drawings for artist-donated dolls and related items, and the chance to win a special artist-created centerpiece doll at each table. Every guest also receives a unique artist-made souvenir doll created especially for the event.

The excitement of meeting ODACA artists, hearing from accomplished speakers, and sharing the day with fellow collectors makes the luncheon one of the most popular events of the UFDC convention. Reservations may be made online at [ODACA.org](http://ODACA.org) under the Events section.

## **Patron Membership**

ODACA also welcomes Patron Members—collectors and enthusiasts who wish to support the artists and the art of doll making. Patron members play an important role in the organization, particularly during ODACA Day, when they assist with setup, serve as table hosts, and help manage drawings for artist-donated dolls and other items.

Patrons also receive access to the Members Only section of the ODACA website, early access to the yearly artist salesroom at the UFDC convention, and a subscription to the *Expressions* newsletter featuring new work by ODACA artists. Many patrons are collectors, and the newsletter provides a wonderful glimpse into the latest creations by ODACA members.

## **UFDC Connections**

ODACA has enjoyed a long and valued relationship with the United Federation of Doll Clubs (UFDC). UFDC provides the conference space for the ODACA Luncheon and the Artists Showroom, where ODACA members display their work for sale to convention attendees and the public.

While many UFDC collectors focus on antique and vintage dolls, visitors to the showroom often discover the creativity and artistry of contemporary doll makers. Many leave inspired—and sometimes with a new artist doll for their collection.

UFDC has also hosted presentations by ODACA artists such as Sandra Wright Justiss and Christine Shively Benjamin, allowing them to share their knowledge and creative experiences with doll enthusiasts. ODACA is grateful for UFDC's continued support and the strong partnership between the two organizations—one representing collectors and enthusiasts and the other representing artists who create original dolls.

## **Looking Toward the Future**

The work of ODACA artists will endure. Their dolls will become the treasured finds of future auctions and doll shows—proudly displayed in homes today and cherished as the collectibles of tomorrow. As ODACA states on its website, “The contemporary doll artist is vital to the collectors of the future. Without the artist, what would there be for the collector to collect—or for the historian to study?”

For more information about ODACA artists, the ODACA Day Luncheon, and how to become an Artist or Patron Member, please visit [ODACA.org](http://ODACA.org). We would love to have you join us.

Carol Johansen  
Artist Member 2019