

Morton Bartlett

By Marnie Weber



The first piece of art that I ever bought was a **Morton Bartlett** print, *Girl with Red Scarf*. She is fair and blonde with a fuzzy red hat and scarf. She is looking down at me now as I write. The lovely little girl has a strange half smile, half grimace on her face. I don't know if she is about to laugh or cry.

It is this perfect embodiment of joy, sorrow, love and loss that all of **Morton Barlett's** children possess. They seem haunted by memories of abandonment and isolation while frozen in emotionally wrought moments of childhood. The dolls themselves are so special and tender, each

a labor of love made with gentle care. They have perfect features, lively expressions, and handmade, meticulously sewn clothes. I was lucky enough to be able to lift the red skirt of the auburn haired girl and was stunned at what I saw. There on her snug white panties is an illustration of a little girl riding a rocket into outer space!

In some of the prints I see a girl with a straw hat lecturing her stuffed animals - *Don't be so naughty!* - and a cute pig-tailed red-headed girl clutching her face and stomach in writhing agony after being reprimanded for what she does not know. One of the beautiful things about **Bartlett**'s work is this feeling of questioning. The dolls and their portraits alike have this subtle feeling of inquiry. The dolls seem to be asking: *If I were so loved, how can I be so alone? If I am good, how could I be bad? If I am smiling, how can I feel so much sorrow?*

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