

Morton Bartlett

By Maurizio Cattelan



Morton Bartlett: My hobby is making plaster sculptures. Its purpose is the same as all good hobbies: to release the urges which don't find an outlet through other channels.

Julie: Father began one day in 1936 when he absent-mindedly picked up a ball of clay and started to massage it and work it lovingly into a head. Fascinated by the potential of sculpture, he was intrigued by his own handiwork and took to doll-making the way a mathematician takes to difficult equations: learning the skills needed for his desired results and then striving for perfection.

Elizabeth: Our dear papa was orphaned at the age of 8 and was adopted.

James: We were crafted as self-portraits during that seminal period of his life. Daddy never married or had children. It encouraged people to speculate that we, the family he created, were the family he wanted, but never actually had.

Tom: Like Geppetto, he wanted to breathe life into us.

Lucy: But his blue fairy turned to be a camera - and the photos he took of us revealed an impressive awareness of the power of light and lens to animate our inanimation.

David: Daddy knew about art and artists, he couldn't have been an outsider. He was well educated and well-rounded, there was nothing primitive or strange about him.

Carol: Our dad invested a great deal of effort into making us look realistic. He used medical growth charts and anatomy books to ensure that we were correct in every detail. But we aren't examples of what would later become super-realism. We always have the artificial, toy-like appearance of dolls and mannequins. This is the core of our appeal: we are obviously unreal, and at the same time, we are captivating and alive.

Margaret: Was father a real-life version of Nabokov's Humbert Humbert? Did he create us as artificial Lolitas? Was he externalising

his psyche, opening himself up to a feminine inner child and setting her free?

Paul: It's very unusual to find someone who is so sweet and so scary at the same time. Our startling gynaecological realness places us very clearly in this sweet/scary place.

Chirsty: We never saw a young model or a child in his studio, or anything untoward that could cast aspersions on his character.

Virginie: Sometimes we cast our eyes downward or act in a guarded fashion. It is as if he knew something was going on.

Albert: Since that time, his reputation has exploded - and so have the hypotheses about what drove him to create us.

Violet: Father wanted a toy company to manufacture us, he thought we could become big sellers like Barbie. What about the dolls' anatomic details? He was definitely a man ahead of his time.

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