

A Kick in the Kishkes

Penny Azar falls in love with all things sweet and small-

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY PENNY AZAR

Just when you think you've suffered the worst knocks—the biggest hip-pocket hitters of your collecting days—along comes one of the biggest kicks in the kishkes...

Kishkes. How appropriate is this Yiddish word? Literally, it means “the guts.” And Helen Kish has kicked me in the kishkes for the second time since Riley, and in a most lethal serve, I might add. The object of my obsession might be only six inches of resin to a lot of people, but to me it's a whole personality—possibly an alter ego—which has taken control of my life: Ellery.

So far, I've avoided confusing you, but I'm afraid that this is where I must start. First of all, although many people have assumed this baby is a girl, from the very first glimpse, to me, *she* was a *he*. I dived for the preorder button in my head, and I immediately went in for the big dive: *gotta have 'im at any price*. Then as time progressed and the wait for this baby turned to months, I forgot which was which and found that the name Avery had slipped into my head. And Avery, I'm afraid, stayed. I have to stop, think, and kick myself to remember that my little Avery, to the rest of the world, is known as Ellery by Helen Kish.

A tiny boy, a brother to Riley, a doll by Helen Kish. The wait has been long and the doll long-anticipated. And now the kid's here. You'd think that would be the end of it, but no! The enabling has only just begun. The kick in the kishkes has precipitated yet another diversion. Mr. Tonner, you did this to me! All I wanted was a sexy doll and some “frocks.” Now I've got a family: Matt, Russell, pre-teen Marley, babies, toddlers, demanding three-year-olds, and handmade polymer babies—all requiring the trappings of the average family!

Unquestionably for every baby there must be a well-outfitted nursery. Now where was that list of “must-haves”? Oh, yes...I need a bed. Must have a bed, preferably a crib with a moving side. Oh, and a change table. I must have a change table with a few shelves for storing the diapers and baby



accessories. Of course, I also need a carrycot! Mustn't forget that! I need somewhere to hang the baby towel and bed linens. The nursery also needs a chair for mother and baby, and when dad goes out, he has to carry the baby somehow. Or would he prefer a stroller?

But where will all these “must-haves” come from? I wish the good fairy would come and grant me my wishes...but wait! She did! Her name is Bashette! In actual fact, Bashette isn't one person. Bashette is three: MaryWalraff, her husband BrianWalraff, and colleague Amber Johannes.

About a year ago the three friends started making beds for Barbie. I asked about the team and who does what for Bashette. Mary mulled it over and eventually replied that there really wasn't a definitive answer to my question. All three have their own input from the conception to the finished product, and Mary insists that what they create and sell is a combined effort that can hardly be deconstructed down to who did what and who thought of what. Perhaps Brian is the one with the actual soldering iron and Amber the one who is finishing the bedding, but the result is the magic that has been created by each person's input along the way.

Amber bought her first Riley about six months ago. She adores Riley. In fact she's so big on Riley that she asked Brian to make a crib for her. But Amber wondered if he could weld one side lower. A few hours later Brian emerged from his workstation with a fully working crib. Brian



designed the crib using six-foot high Mary as his “model” for sizing the bed, with Mary representing the sixteen-inch fashion doll who is, for all intents and purposes, the best suited “mother” for Riley and Ellery in terms of scale.

With a combined shrug, the trio of Mary, Brian, and Amber figured, “Why not?” Soon after, they started offering the crib on the market. And not one, not two, but dozens of beds later, they have become very popular because of their lovely furniture. They make beds for Tyler, accessories such as lamps and bedside tables, and it won’t be stopping there.

When I saw their crib, I started to wonder, “What else can these people do?” The answer is that there is no limit! I wrote to Mary and told her how much I loved her work. And I started my list of “must-haves”...beginning with the crib. I didn’t really use very many words, just the suggestion of what I could see vaguely in my head. To my amazement and (I think) barely twenty-four hours later, there it was!

The most amazing crib I have seen. “Well,” says I to Mary, “what about a change table?” And within a week I had an assemblage of nursery items that one can only dream of! And as if I hadn’t stretched the friendship already, I popped the “stroller” word. I’m still shaking my head with what this talented team did.

Brian’s energy and inspiration is inherited. His dad was always making “stuff” from bits and pieces he had lying around. And when asked, like Brian, his dad always well exceeded the original brief by leaps and bounds. For example,

when his dad was asked forty years ago for a Barbie house, he came up with a house with working lights and even a tiny working doorbell! Even the tiny floor tiles were cut and laid in accurate scale. Now Brian, following in Dad’s footsteps and armed with this inherited talent, has been let loose on us doll collectors, and especially me!

The ladies of Bashette are heavily into designing the bedding, choosing the fabric, and thinking about the next project. Like many artists, they will often let the textile suggest what kind of bedding they will create.

Take a peek at my meager photographs. Here you will find my little cast of characters from my “Tales from a Crowded Kitchen Bench.” You will see Avery (the baby formerly—or maybe formally—known as Ellery), Phoebelou (who is a retouch by me), and Russell, all surrounded, aided and abetted by the nursery gear from a fairy godmother with a magic wand who lives in a land where wishes can come true...the land of Bashette.

Bashette can be contacted at:
<http://www.bashetteironworks.com/>.

P.S.: I’m in trouble with Bashette at the moment because in the course of this friendship I’ve introduced them to polymer handmade babies. Who knows where this is going to lead. Maybe to a baby carriage? Mmmmm??? ❖