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Artisan

Whimsical **display cabinets** *showcase a Calgary designer's appreciation for classical architecture.*

By Alex Newman

The one-storey pink and green "Coventry," which opens in the front, is similar to the dollhouse Kakoschke (*pictured, left*) designed for the Calgary Opera fundraiser. It is 24 inches high, 12 inches deep and 18 inches wide, and houses just about anything from towels to perfume. $1,695.

The use of faux stone blocks for "Tatiana," this eggplant and cream jewelry box house, cleverly conceals its seven drawer edges. The roof tilts back and the drawers are slim enough to display jewelry, as well as silk scarves or bow-ties. $1,895.

The Mirabella's blue trim was first noticed by Kakoschke in a fashion magazine and incorporated with details from other sources. $2,500.

aus Couture started a little over a year ago after interior designer Monika Kakoschke was asked to build a dollhouse for the Calgary Philharmonic Opera's fundraiser. The exercise seemed natural for her, since she collects dolls and has "always loved dollhouses." When that first dollhouse — embellished in haute mode for the '90s — aroused keen interest, Kakoschke toyed with the house-within-a-home idea, eventually blending art with utility to create multi-use furnishings that were pretty to look at.

Kakoschke is never without her notebook or camera to capture eye-catching details such as unusual trim and door mouldings, or a particular style of coach lamps or iron grillwork. By lifting details from here and there, her houses become "a little bit fantasy, a little bit real thing."

The houses are in part a showcase for Kakoschke's own interior design techniques, especially her talent for replicating any exterior using faux finishes. The six or seven weeks it takes to complete a house begins when Kakoschke sketches the preliminary design for an architectural draftsperson to draw up plans and a special group of craftspeople to execute construction. She then paints the first in each series, and provides a certificate of design authenticity with each house.

Kakoschke's functional art sits comfortably anywhere in the house, from the bedroom as stylish storage for perfume, jewelry, scarves or bow-ties, to a foyer or living room to store rare books or dolls. And the latest five-foot-high model is perfect for an audio system. *Haus Couture, through MSK Design Studio, 2-215A-10 St. N.W., Calgary, AB T2N 1V5, (403) 270-2269.*

The two-storey "Chateau" in a buttery yellow and white with green roof, stands three feet high. Light floods through the open roof when the house is placed beside a floor lamp. Inside, a glass shelf increases storage capacity. $2,385.