



**KATHY AND JANET LENNON ARE NOW 'BEST PALS' WITH THE WELL-KNOWN FOLK ARTIST JIM SHORE.**

Jim Shore's sketch of his design for the Janet doll's dress clearly shows the influence of quilt patterns in his work.

Featuring quilt patterns and swirling rosemaling, Shore's sketch of the Kathy doll's dress is remarkably similar to the final fabric version.

Shore sketched several versions of the Classic Collection dresses before settling on his favorite designs.

**PERFECT PARTNERSHIP**

Jim Shore, Janet Lennon, and Kathy Lennon were "still tweaking the prototypes" even as they introduced their new co-branded dolls to retailers at Toy Fair.



*By definition,*

it's impossible to know when serendipity will strike, so no one could have predicted the outcome when Kathy and Janet Lennon of the singing group The Lennon Sisters would team up with award-winning modern folk artist Jim Shore.

"Jim had been thinking of designing a soft doll, and our dolls and children's products are so similar in spirit with family traditions and values to what he had been thinking of, that it just made sense," explain Kathy and Janet Lennon. "Of course, we are very familiar with Jim Shore and his work. We were really excited about the idea and wanted to pursue the project—of course! We have enjoyed the process immensely and are extremely pleased with the result."

The results of the year-long collaboration are four new, limited-edition, collectible soft dolls. The original Best Pals line comprises reproductions of the Lennon's childhood rag dolls, which were made by their mother and grandmother in 1949 to resemble the sisters. The new collectibles line features the familiar dolls wearing exclusive dresses and aprons designed by Shore. The initial line includes two classic and two Christmas-themed dolls. Each style will be limited to 5,000 dolls

and numbered; they come in individual boxes with certificates of authenticity and special music CDs of selected songs by the Lennon's. The dolls have been in stores since August.

Despite their close collaboration on the project, the three didn't meet in person until the dolls were launched in January. "We were very excited and nervous," confide Kathy and Janet Lennon. "We have so much admiration for this very talented artist. We had a great time meeting his people and signing autographs with him. We felt honored."

The admiration was mutual. "I always loved [The Lennon Sisters'] music—the whole family used to watch [them perform on television] every Saturday night. It was more or less a tradition around our house," says Shore. "So I was excited about the idea before I really knew what I was getting into. ... When I

*"The thought behind [Best Pals] is all about family and home and tradition. Those ideas are at the heart of my work, too."*

*Collaborative Kismet*

*By Mindy Kinsey*



**THE COLLECTIONS** In designing the co-branded collection, Jim Shore and the Lennons envisioned two lines. The Classic Collection soft dolls are 16 inches (40½ cm) tall, have yarn hair in ponytails, and wear pastel-colored dresses embellished with embroidery and rosemailing. Each doll is boxed and sold separately. They are limited, numbered editions that come with certificates of authenticity and a CD. Jim Shore's signature is embroidered on the dresses.

The 16-inch (40½ cm) Holiday Collection cloth dolls have yarn hair in braids fastened by festive ribbons. They wear red and green dresses bedecked with ribbons, lace, and rosemailing. They are also boxed and sold separately in limited, numbered editions. Each doll comes with a CD of holiday music and a certificate of authenticity.

in folk art. ... But for this project I was using the shape developed by Kathy and Janet, the rag dolls they'd had as children. So that part was already taken care of.

"The second step is always the most fun for me. That's where I combine elements taken from different types of decorative folk art to create a unique patterning across the image. I use quilt patterns, of course, and my own style of rosemailing. But I also use designs taken from appliqué, tole painting, and the imagery known today as Pennsylvania Dutch. I admit it's not a normal combination. It's certainly not a style someone would learn in art school. But it works for me. My goal in this second step is to create a design that keeps the eye constantly moving across the entire piece. My rule is that if my eye stops on any particular area or element, then something's not right. I need to rework it.

"For these dolls I used a combination of my favorite quilt design, the eight-pointed Ohio Star pattern, and my own particular style of rosemailing in appliqué and embroidery. The Ohio Star is a variation on a nine-patch quilt pattern that most quilters are familiar with by one name or another. There are thousands of variations out there. My rosemailing is a combination of several classic styles of decorative painting that came to the New World from Scandinavia in the 17th and 18th centuries. It's unique to me but very much in a tradition that dates back centuries.

"I wanted these to have an authentic folk-art look. Dolls can of course be extremely intricate, but I wanted these to have the look and feel of dolls you could really play with, really keep forever, really love. Just like the originals that Kathy and Janet had."

Once Shore designed the dresses, the Lennons took over.



actually saw their dolls, I fell in love. They've got a folk-art look that's perfect for my style. And the thought behind them is all about family and home and tradition. Those ideas are at the heart of my work, too. The more I thought about it, the more excited I got! So I sort of began the project on faith, before we ever got a chance to really meet. Lucky for me it all worked out.

"We finally got together in Atlanta, when we introduced the line to retailers. Truth is, we were still tweaking the prototypes even then! Working with Kathy and Janet face to face was great fun for me. They're the real deal, talented and warm and funny. But down to earth and focused. And they're very much into the details of making the product just right. I'm kind of a perfectionist myself, so I admire that in the people I work with. And it's nice if you can laugh a little while you're at it!"

The distance—Shore's office is in Illinois while the Lennons live in Missouri—wasn't a problem during project development. After hashing out the basic idea, the sisters sent Shore several samples and he incorporated them into his usual creative process. "Creating the art was relatively straight-forward," says Shore. "Normally design is a two-step process for me. The first is the shape or character, and that's usually a variation of a traditional image, incorporating the distorted proportion and flat perspective typically found

"[Jim] forwarded his drawings and his pattern palette, and we fell in love with them. We sent the materials on to our sample makers and pushed for every detail possible to ensure each design had the Jim Shore look and feel. We sent a few designs back before finally accepting samples that we felt Jim would be proud to be part of. ... It was very important for us to be able to duplicate [Jim's] beautiful patterns," they say. "Every detail had to have the finest quality. His brand is so well known, and we needed him to be proud of this venture. We all believe in this and worked very hard for our finished product."

While the new collectible dolls are very similar to the standard Best Pals designs, they have a few special touches to set them apart. The Classic Collection dolls sport ponytails rather than braids. Plus, say Janet and Kathy Lennon, "Jim changed the eyes on the dolls so they have a light reflection in the iris. They really do come alive. Our original dolls did not have these because our handmade childhood dolls, which were our inspiration, did not have these. There is a high level of detailing on the dresses and

added features such as quilting and embroidered aprons." The dolls are described as the "initial offering" in the collectibles line, which can't help but make collectors hopeful that more designs are coming. If another serendipitous opportunity is in the works, however, the three are keeping mum for the moment. Shore notes only that the project gave him "some ideas for new designs in other media."

Kathy and Janet Lennon hint, "We have been collectors of Jim's fine artistry for years and never dreamed we would possibly ever meet him and then work with him and also fall in love with him. It would be wonderful to continue to work with Jim for many years and with many projects. We have a lot of ideas, as he does. The three of us have kidded and dreamed about a lot of thoughts. Keep your eyes and ears open!" DR

For more information about the Best Pals dolls, visit [bestpals.net](http://bestpals.net). To learn more about the Lennon Sisters, visit [lennonsisters.com](http://lennonsisters.com). To see more of Jim Shore's work, visit [jimshore.com](http://jimshore.com).

## MEET JIM SHORE

Jim Shore grew up in rural South Carolina, the son of artistic parents who instilled a love of the traditional images and values of American folk art. His grandmother was a master quilter who taught him an appreciation for the patience and skill required to bring intricate designs to life. Shore drew inspiration from these roots. "There's an innocence and purity to the quilts, appliqué, and tole painting found in early American art. These were masterpieces designed by artists who were driven to create. I collect quilts dating back over 150 years, and when I look at the level of skill and creativity I am continually amazed. This is high art from humble beginnings."

Initially Shore pursued his art where and when he could. He studied

engineering and received a degree in business. He supported his young family as an engineer, honing his skills as a sculptor and painter in his spare time. After several false starts and financial setbacks, he founded his own business, Designs Americana, to market his designs. It was tough going in the beginning, but within three years Designs Americana had more than 350 employees and more orders than they could fill. In fact, the demands of managing Designs Americana made it difficult for Shore to concentrate on his art. In 2000 Shore entered a licensing agreement with Enesco, a worldwide leader in marketing gifts, collectibles, and decorative accessories, to create Heartwood Creek by Jim Shore, the line of seasonal and everyday decorative accessories

that has brought him worldwide fame.

While working with Enesco, Jim perfected his unique style, combining elements of folk art and a vibrant color palette applied to traditional themes. Taking authentic designs from quilting, rosemailing, appliqué, and flat perspective folk art, Jim creates an intricate and colorful work of art that reflects our shared cultural heritage yet is unmistakably Jim Shore. "My work is not a single statement but a lot of elements mixed together. I use colors that I love—colonial, antiques, jewel tones, and sometimes unusual combinations that I happen to love at the moment. Put together it's a pleasure to look at."

Today Shore's designs have distribution in more than 25,000 stores worldwide, accounting for

more than \$200 million in sales annually. He is the No. 1 artist brand on QVC, and his Disney Traditions by Jim Shore line is one of the most successful co-branded lines in the specialty retail market with more than \$50 million in retail sales. Jim is currently working to develop a more extensive lifestyle collection featuring functional home decor. In addition to his current brand offering from licensees including Enesco, CR Gibson, Evergreen, and Manual Woodworkers and Weavers, Jim plans to work with historical landmarks and entertainment properties including Colonial Williamsburg, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, even Elvis. His work can be found at fine retailers throughout North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia.