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Your Precious Miseries

Interview with artist Melissa Diaz

By Kat Avila | Web Published 9.27.2005

I met Melissa Diaz in Artists' Alley at Anime Expo 2005 in Anaheim, California. A Puerto Rican American from the East Coast, this illustrator received her training at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). At this year's Comic-Con International in San Diego, some of her Precious Miseries characters were picked up by Toynami to be made into 15-inch plush dolls. Her dolls will be available in 200 select teenage-oriented Hot Topic stores, as well as on the Hot Topic web site by Christmas.



Web latinola.com

KA = Kat Avila
MD = Melissa Diaz

KA: Your Precious Miseries postcard series drew me to your booth at Anime Expo. The character portrayed on each card is so cute, though your characters would slap me or punch me for saying that. Each character embodies this intriguing mix of cuteness and menace. What are their stories?

MD: Each character is different and portrays a different concept. For example, Lil Easter. I was in a Michaels arts and crafts store and saw the cutest bald girl. I stalked her around the store, and I decided that I wanted to have a bald character. I am actually working on a Precious Miseries web site where you can read up on each character's personality.

KA: Were you cosplaying any particular character at Anime Expo? How long did it take for you to make your costume?

MD: I have been getting into the Gothic Lolita scene and decided to try it out. I designed the outfit and created it along with other skirts and accessories over a two-week span. I did not make the shirt however. LOL, I also wore a J-Rock [Japanese rock music and Visual Kei]-inspired outfit the day after. I bought a corset at Hot Topic and decided to design a skirt and accessories to go with it. I ended up with an eye patch and a mini top hat.

KA: You also make plush character dolls. Was the plush doll you were holding [in the photos I took] an original character or from an anime or manga?

MD: StiTcheS is an original character that was the result of too many hours of FFXIX [role-playing game Final Fantasy IX]. My plan for StiTcheS is that he will be available to the masses as a plush. I do not know when this will come about, but hopefully within the next year or two.

KA: This year was the first time you attended Anime Expo. How does it compare with the conventions you attend on the East Coast where you're from?

MD: Actually this is the second time, but my first time in the Artists' Alley and I loved it. I definitely want to come back again. The dealers room is much larger than that of Otakon [in Baltimore, MD] and Katsucon [Washington, D.C.-area]. I loved the variety in merchandise, such as the Loli vendors. Since I was in the A.A. [Artists' Alley], I was unable to really experience the con to its fullest, but I did get to attend the Masquerade [costumers showcase event] and, well..., I have seen better.

KA: Are there any Puerto Rican cultural influences in your work, since you mentioned both your parents were Puerto Rican?

MD: Unfortunately not at this time. I am American by birth and Puerto Rican by heritage. I would love to visit PR and get in touch with my roots and visit familia, but that will not change who I am.

KA: Where do you hope your art will take you in the near future?

MD: I would love to see people from all nations enjoy my art [<http://www.gro-wings.com>], whether it is in 2-D or 3-D form.

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