

MAGIC IN MINIATURE



Who knew that long suri fibre would be such a 'must have' for those who make wigs for dolls. One such company is Zerga Studio, based in Poland, who buy their long suri from UK Alpaca Ltd. The dolls are BJD dolls, that is any doll that is articulated with ball and socket joints.

Emilia Machnik
has the story.



Zerga Studio is a studio that produces semi-finished products from suri fibre for BJD collectible figurines and dolls. The company is based in Poland, in Szczecinek.

The founders are Emilia and Przemyslaw Machnik. "We really wanted the project to be related to art."

BJD's are high quality collectible figurines and dolls that are gaining popularity in the world, especially in Asian countries. They are made mostly of polyurethane resin, their bodies have so-called spherical joints, so they can positively pose. They have a price of 300 to even tens of thousands of dollars.

These are not children's toys but are artistic and collectible items. Dolls can be realistic, full of eroticism, beautiful, but also defective or imperfect. Very often they are famous characters such as elves and other fantastic creatures. They can be styled by changing clothes, make-up, eyes or wigs. Often they have wings, elf ears and so on.

Collectors are divided into those who buy ready-made BJD's, that is, made with very complicated make-up, wig, exchangeable eyes and dressed. Others buy "puppet blank" and intend to finish it themselves by giving it a specific character.

Many collectors treat a doll or figurine as an exhibit, often using a glass cover. Very large collectors use dolls to photograph or design clothes for them. Others sometimes simply collect fantastic creatures such as unicorns, centaurs, elves.

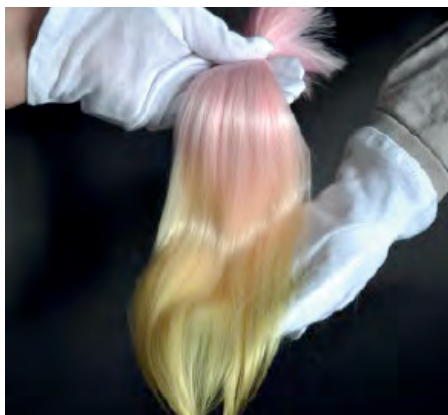
Like most BJD's collectibles, BJDs are issued in limited quantities and even in individual copies, so some collectors treat them as investments.

WORKS OF ART

BJD's world is a magical world that constantly shows new faces. The most famous dolls have their fakes (so called Recast), the most famous artists are exhibiting their works in reputable galleries.

Just look at the art of Marina Bychkova (www.enchanteddoll.com) to make the world of BJD's become the world we would like to touch.

Creating dolls often takes years, it is very precise and complicated work. The artist finishes the costume with silk, introduces elements of gold with expensive stones. Dolls often have tattoos made with incredible precision. Collectors appreciate the quality of workmanship. This detail makes the work acquired by them unique. So it is obvious that the hair from which a wig is made should be of natural fibre.



Together with my husband, we decided to join forces and start a project by creating the best hair for the BJD's wigs from suri alpaca fibre. We have produced about 3,000 samples, it took us over half a year.

Correct processing of the suri fleece is a very complicated process. First of all it requires an individual approach to each one.

The most problematic and most difficult to process is a thin, delicate fleece. It is most desirable among artists.

The thinnest fleece is incredibly beautiful, but it is very difficult to clean, dye and comb. Even the smallest error can destroy it. But the final effect rewards hard work, because after proper treatment the fibre looks almost like mulberry silk.

Unfortunately, in the case of the thinnest and most delicate hair, 80% is wasted. We assumed from the beginning that our product is of the highest quality and there is no compromise. Beautiful fleece of appropriate length, nine to twelve inches, is very difficult to find.

SHINING EXAMPLE

Suri fleece should shine, should not break or have too much discoloration. The purity of the fleece is not so crucial in terms of the final effect, since it's thoroughly washed. Nonetheless, all sorts of grass residues, stems, have a major impact on subsequent waste during further processing.

The quality of the fleece is always checked by making a sample. Samples are taken from various places of the fleece, then washed, nourished and straightened. This allows us to determine the actual quality of the fleece and appropriately segregate it.

Initially, we bought suri in various countries of the world, from the USA, Australia and of course in Europe looking for the best quality. We have found the desired qualities of alpaca from breeders in the UK. Thanks to established cooperation, 70% of Zerga's Hair Studio products for BJD's are produced from UK fleece.

In the years 2016-2017, the average prices of alpaca suri fleece were similar worldwide (US \$ 20-35 per kilogram). The highest prices we had came from breeders from Chile and Peru.

The fleece processing process begins with separation into appropriate lengths is then segregated in terms of the quality and thickness of the hair.

The next stage is washing. We have developed our own detergent for washing the fleece.

Here you have to pay particular attention to the temperature and hardness of the water during the treatment. Choosing the right temperature is crucial to achieving the desired quality. Too high or low temperature can damage the hair, so it is important to adjust the working temperature individually to each batch. Alpaca also does not like the rapid change of temperature, so it must be constant. Very often one alpaca fleece can react differently to another. To prevent tangling of the hair, the fleece washing process is by hand, since the use of different types of laundry bags or meshes causes it to tangle and increase waste.

We use special, best quality dyes for dyeing alpaca fleece. Most of the colours we dye by soaking in water with loose dye. Some of the colors are obtained using transparent hair dye. Also, at this stage, you should approach each part individually. To create a color is very simple, but

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to repeat the color is extremely difficult, because the dye soaks into the hair very differently.

The whole stage of washing and dying finish by moisturizing with a special formula developed by us. This is a very delicate blend. Conditioner also makes the hair less static and smells good.

HAIR CARE

After properly rinsing, laying and drying the whole is gently combed. For combing we use many brushes and combs. Brushes similar to toothbrushes are also perfect for cleaning.

The cleaned hair is straightened with a hair straightener, woven with a colored eraser, inserted into antistatic boxes and sent to the wig artist.

We always process the work directly before shipping to the customer, so that the hair is fresh and fragrant. We also make custom colours for our regular customers.

After receiving our product, the artist makes the wig most often with an adhesive or knit

technique, since suri is very thin. The wig can be combed, straightened or even treated with a curler. This is an exclusive product, because as a result, properly processed suri hair is exceptionally beautiful.

As of today, we work with artists from around the world who deal with "customization" BJD's or themselves make such dolls. Most of our hair is shipped to Asian countries and the USA. However, it must be remembered that this is a small market for this moment, but thriving. Many of our customers buy our hair not only for BJD's dolls. Alpaca hair is also used for other types of dolls. We even created a beard for Saint Nicholas for a photo shoot.

We would like to be experts in processing alpaca suri fleece for the BJD market. We see that suri alpaca has tremendous potential. We are constantly learning new techniques.

We believe that our passion will allow us to stay in this magical market. 🧡

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