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WELCOME

to the January edition!

Happy new year! Your first issue of 2023 awaits, and we have a treasure trove of inspirational ideas ahead for you! From seeing in the new year in small scale with Sadie Brown as she celebrates Kathleen Holmes' new year scenes, to looking at the wonderful idea of bottled gardens in terrariums with Dene Bebbington, we have plenty to get the year ahead off to a cracking start, if you've been looking for some new ideas.

For those who love to explore architecture, Deb Weissler looks at Mark Turpin's custom suburban home which has grand proportions. It could certainly be viewed as a dream house! Still looking at dolls houses themselves, we travel to the mountains and find a cottage steeped in Eastern European folklore and what an ornate cottage this is! Turn to page 48 to find out more.

Also, Moi Ali takes us with her as she moves house – and all her mini houses too! A difficult task for any miniaturist, to transport all of their prized possessions, so Moi gives her top tips on making a move the smoothest it can be. You'll find everything she has to say on page 27.

The top tips and advice continue with Bea Broadwood of Petite Properties and Ruth Flewelling Lesbirel, we know how much you value their words, so we'll make sure they continue throughout the year!

Happy mini-making!

Joanne Garwell

Editor



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Make these today!

INSPIRED BY TOKYO



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A massive thank you to this month's contributors...

Sadie Brown, Deb Weissler, Ann Evans, Dene Bebbington, Bea Broadwood, Maive Ferrando, Moi Ali & Ruth Flewelling Lesbirel.



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The closing date for all entries is
31st January 2023. Good luck!



Midnight miniatures



A wintry new year celebration

See in the bells with an ode to Auld Lang Syne, celebrating New Year in small scale.

Home for new year

Every year has its high points, low points, and its fair share of 'ugh, I really can't be bothered' moments, but what they all share is that same sense of optimism as the clock strikes midnight and we raise our glasses to toast new beginnings. In the case of new year's resolutions, those new beginnings might struggle to see out January, but the temptation of a brand-new year stretched out before us never fails to charm us anew come the end of December. With this in mind, it's easy to see why new year is a concept attracting the attention of some of our most gifted miniaturists.

Even prior to the pandemic, home is where the majority of us choose to see in the bells. Capturing that familiar atmosphere in small scale isn't easy, but



▲ Erika's 'bubbly champagne flute' cookies

something Kathleen Holmes manages in spades, transforming the living room of her handcrafted dolls house for the perfect cosy New Year's Eve in front of the fire. The coffee table is home to an ice bucket, keeping the champagne chilled as we approach midnight, and the tiny napkins and party blowers are an inspired touch! With the fire crackling in the grate and the illuminated Christmas tree teased just out of view, the scene is set, all brought together by the 'Happy New Year' banner strung across the mantelpiece. The overall scene is one we can all feel a connection to, and you're drawn right into its heart, evoking memories along with just a hint of excitement and anticipation. Of course, perhaps a quiet night in on Hogmanay is not your cup of tea, and you prefer your



champagne served with a dash of the party spirit! In which case, Kathleen also has you covered. Laden with canapés, cakes and caviar, her dining room table provides the setting for a very special celebration. A feast for the eyes, those gorgeous napkins make a reappearance, as do the party blowers, but the star has to be the handmade decorative centrepiece. Designed using tiny New Year cards and silver tinsel, it feels wonderfully reminiscent of those old-fashioned Christmas decorations brought out year after year, a part of our lives, generation after generation. And who can resist that miniature cocktail shaker? 🍸

◀ Erika's miniature caviar brings in the new year in style

▼ Kathleen Holmes spends a cosy New Year's Eve in front of the fire





▲ Creating memories. 2022 was an exciting year for Kristine Hanna.

Winter elegance

Robina Patterson also delivers on atmosphere, taking us outdoors for an imaginative twist on New Year's Eve. Whilst in reality, you wouldn't spend 31st December sat outside in the chilly night air, in miniature anything is possible! And you can equally imagine Robina's winter wonderland scene as an indoor dinner with tickets highly prized, the lavish theme and backdrop put together by the top party planners! Indeed, Robina's sharp eye for contemporary design comes to the fore, the table's blue and white colour scheme, with gold and silver accents, a delight. The velvet tablecloth, the colour of a rich midnight sky and complete with matching chair drapes, is an inspired choice, delivering on that indulgent vibe. The sparkly place settings, each topped with an eye-catching

party hat, also add to the layers found within the diorama. Illuminated by two seasonal winter white trees, who wouldn't want a seat around this table as the clock strikes midnight?

Lighting proved equally important to Kristine Hanna in the creation of her own scene marking the start of 2022, a year that saw her achieve big things in the world of small scale, designing the stunning Brentwood dolls house kit for [miniatures.com](https://www.miniatures.com). With two tiny champagne flutes sat amongst the decorations, waiting for that rom-com happy ever after, Kristine's luxury apartment, with its cityscape backdrop, resembles the set of a Hollywood movie. Kristine holds a 1/12th scale bottle of pink champagne in images capturing the scene for posterity, and her handmade number balloons, perfectly crafted from gold foil are a fine example of the resourceful ingenuity at the heart of the miniatures community.

A toast to creativity

The champagne flows freely throughout these dioramas, but nowhere more so than within Erika Pitera's celebratory scene, where her champagne fountain takes the celebrations to the next level, alongside oysters, caviar and chocolate truffles, all perfectly handcrafted. Champagne coupes bring an air of elegance to any grand occasion, the miniature fountain also showcasing a combination of skill and talent. Erika's new year creations feature a selection of sparkling sugar cookies, each handcrafted from polymer clay. Her range includes everything from top hats and stars, to her self-described 'bubbly champagne flutes'. Eagle eyed readers will have already noticed the latter taking pride of place on a huge silver platter at the end of Kathleen Holmes' party table. The flute cookies are just 9/16in

► A feast for the eyes! Kathleen Holmes' party table



tall, and next to their 'iced' champagne bottle counterparts are a real statement design for any miniature celebration. Another item connecting the scenes we've explored are the identical miniature replica champagne bottles, seen in both Erika and Robina's dioramas. Realistic to the highest degree, these tiny bottles are simply stunning, creating a little thrill every time you look at them.

By its very nature, time doesn't stand still. Despite our best efforts, we're never truly 'in the moment', because the moment has passed us by before we've even uttered the words. Life is a bit like a train journey; continually moving, the landscape changing before our eyes as we move forward to our next destination. Sometimes quickly, sometimes more sedate. But, as that march of

time leads us once more to January, there is much to inspire. January derives from Janus, the god of doorways. A door to a new year bringing us full circle, back to those new beginnings. And if what our talented artisans have created to celebrate that new year is anything to go by, just think what lies ahead as we dive into 2023! 🏠



INFO

For more information please visit:

Kristine Hanna

www.paperdollminiatures.com

Kathleen Holmes

www.instagram.com/kathleensdollhouse

Robina Patterson

www.instagram.com/myminiatureabodes

Erika Pitera

www.petiteprovisionsco.com





Summerfield estate

A custom suburban home in grand proportions.

For miniaturists familiar with the work of architectural artist Mark Turpin, you soon realize one of the favorite aspects of creating miniature houses is the wide variety of styles he loves to explore. From elegant Georgian townhouses, soaring French chateaus, houses made almost entirely of glass and eclectic city lofts, Mark's one-off structures are always meticulously executed. His works represent many eras, and he seemingly time travels from one project to the next, making every effort to bring his clients' visions to fruition.

His latest project represents one of today's suburban 'McMansions', as they are so fondly referred to in today's architectural jargon. A 'McMansion' is a colloquial term for a huge and ostentatious house. The big

house trend remains popular in America, with many home buyers opting for upscale amenities and large interior spaces. Grand homes are not exclusive to the US however, and homes like Summerfield appear in many well-to-do suburbs in Canada, the UK and throughout Europe.

Mark's client was initially drawn to a catalogue design for a custom suburban home and she desired to have something similar in style built in miniature. Summerfield was in the works for quite some time until it was finally ready to be built. His client had dreamed for years of owning a large miniature house, with dozens of rooms to decorate and furnish. They compared ideas for many months before starting construction.

"Rather than copying an existing design, we worked within a broad suburban residential style to create an exciting new dream house of her own," Mark explains. "I added a front portico, which I felt a house this size needed, along with the two-story great room with all its windows, and the glass conservatory. I like to include tall spaces in my miniature houses and lots of windows. Summerfield has thirty rooms on three levels, and a meandering U-shaped floor plan. There is a skylight above the entry hall and a central staircase that connects the three levels. One could easily wander around for a while and still find new spaces to explore."

There's no denying 1/12th scale Summerfield will be a huge single-family

house, with over 10,000 square feet if built full scale. Even in miniature it is enormous, nearly the size of a real grand piano. There are many ways to enjoy the rooms, with long views through the house from various angles. Let's ask Mark to take us on a tour!

"Since this house was designed to be built into a hill, the exterior on the ground floor level is handpainted to resemble stone. The upper levels are a mix of handpainted brick on the front and lower sides, along with stucco on the upper sides and the back. Even though the house is asymmetrical, there are symmetrical features, including pairs of exterior and interior columns, paired bay windows, as well as gables and brackets.

Summerfield is unusual because the house takes you on a journey, and there are many different paths you might follow. As a guest, you would enter through the front portico to visit the first-floor rooms: a two-story entrance hall with its adjacent

“Even in miniature it is enormous, nearly the size of a real grand piano!”

reception room or library on the right. Across the entry hall to the left is a two-story sunken living room with a lofted sitting area above.

One of the numerous bay windows is found on the front of the house in the formal dining room, with its attached butler's pantry leading to the breakfast room and kitchen. A wide central corridor

with columns spans the width of the house and connects all of the main rooms to the great or gathering room with its glass ceiling and attached conservatory that is nestled between a pair of bedroom wings.

The residents share six sprawling bedrooms and eight bathrooms. The bedrooms are varying shapes and sizes, some with bay windows and spaces for window seats. All of the bedrooms are connected to the central core of the house via a long gallery that overlooks the great room below. There is a separate staircase leading to the large attic above, with space for even more rooms.

Children living in this house would really have fun, because the ground floor recreation room and attached patio under the deck are surrounded by lots of other hidden spaces in the basement awaiting exploration. Behind the garages there are spaces for a workshop, a home office, 

Summerfield rear view





Interior lounge



Front entrance



Bay window

Handmade windows



laundry room, utility room, and even a secret storage space under the front steps. The grounds await landscaping and a swimming pool. Summerfield is a house of many layers and heights intended for all seasons, as the light entering through the many windows will change throughout the year."

The house is constructed of birch plywood, solid clear pine, basswood, illustration board, acrylic windows and several colours of paint. Mark made all of the windows and doors by hand. The 10,000 bricks are hand-carved into the wood, and each of the 10,000 roof tiles was individually cut and glued in strips. The stone and brickwork finishes highlight Mark's own unique blend of sponge and brush painting in a dozen thin layers of colour.

Portions of the house, such as the structural sections underneath the roof, were framed more like a real house than a dolls house. One of his goals for this project was to make the house appear more like an architectural model than a dolls house. Summerfield is 60in wide, 52in deep, 48in high and weighs over 300 pounds. There are five large individual sections of the house fitted together under three roof sections.

"I personally delivered Summerfield in a large cargo van, driving thousands of miles to her home. It was an honour to finally meet in person and set up the house for her. Summerfield is now awaiting installation in a new hobby room where it will be decorated."

Naturally Mark has his own ideas as to how one might accomplish that. "I would highlight the spaciousness on each level by having some common flooring on each level, such as marble or other stone floors in all the main floor rooms, then, perhaps wood floors in the living room, breakfast room and kitchen. Upstairs, luxurious wall to wall carpet in a light color to soften the spaces and make them comfortable. At the windows, tall sets of formal draperies at the living room and certain other windows, while the great room and conservatory windows could remain uncovered to allow a flood of light through the house. I would probably paint light neutral walls and then add splashes of color with large paintings and wall hangings. There are some good spaces for large hanging chandeliers and lamps, such as the entry hall and the front porch. Good lighting is essential."

Never one to rest on his laurels, Mark is excited about two new projects currently underway: "I am working on a New Orleans-style house we've named Burgundy Terrace, which is the first of two phases in a 1/12th scale courtyard plan named Le Vieux Carré. The setting calls to mind the residential blocks of the Old Quarter in New Orleans, and is based on two historic homes from the 1830s. My other project is a small tea house inspired by the tea rooms of Victorian London. This piece is a table top structure in 1/24th scale."

These are certain to keep Mark very busy in the future! 🏡

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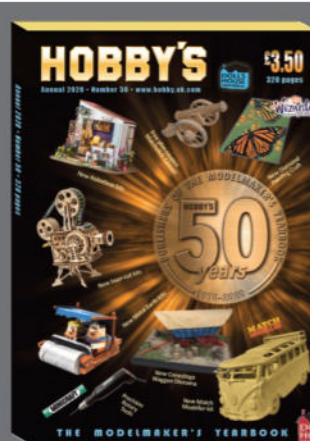


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THE MODELMAKER'S YEARBOOK

Following childhood dreams



Miniaturist Pipi Turner made her dream a reality, which all began in her grandfather's workshop...

Cologne-based miniaturist Pipi Turner makes the kind of furniture and accessories I adore full-sized, and they're even more adorable in 1/12th scale! Influenced by 18th and 19th century Scandinavian Gustavian style and Danish antiques, she finds images of real pieces on the internet – chairs, tables, desks, cabinets - then masterfully recreates them in miniature using basswood and walnut. "This era was probably the most wonderful time in terms of architecture and design," said Pipi. ➡



Charming chandelier

Gustavian furniture is a great choice, as it fits so well in a period interior, but sits equally comfortably in a modern room set. It really is a timeless style that can be both elegant and casual and informal, depending on how the rest of the room is dressed.

Pipi's tools of the trade include a table saw, decoupage saw, a small drill and a cutter. While laser cutters and 3D printers are rapidly finding a place in the miniature world, they're not for Pipi, who works entirely by hand – somehow producing exquisite pieces that have all of the detail of a full-sized piece, without resorting to modern technology. I think that adds a real charm and authenticity to her work.

"Producing pieces by hand is very important to me," she explained. "My grandfather was a carpenter and interior designer, and he built my first dolls house when I was a child. Sadly, it has long since gone. But I retained a secret passion for miniatures, which started with that dolls house."

Pipi continued: "I have happy memories as a child in my grandfather's carpentry workshop. I dreamed of sitting at the carpenter's bench making furniture, doors and windows. I loved the smell of wood and wood glue wafting through the workshop. I was fascinated by how a tree trunk could be magically transformed into a table, chair or sofa!"

She would have loved to have followed in his footsteps, but, as she explained: "My generation was brought up for academic study. We were not encouraged to value handwork."



▲ Cabinet of china
► Gustavian sofa



Detail down to the paintings





Beautiful finish



Incredible cabinetry



Decor on the shelves



Stunning doors to complete





Delightful detail



Small scale accuracy

Being a carpenter was not seen as a fitting career. We had to choose our profession based not on what interested us, but on what was regarded as a reputable calling. Artistic ambitions were ridiculed and seen as a guarantee for social decline. So I went the academic way and became a psychologist and later a piano teacher. These were not what made me tick, but it took many years for me to discover this."

I must say, what Pipi said really resonated with me, as I was of that generation that was pushed down an academic route when my real passion lay in making things and following creative pursuits. I wanted art college, not university, but the choice was never mine!

Ten years ago, Pipi decided to build herself a miniature house despite having no knowledge of how to achieve this. "I taught myself the skills of miniature-making. It was a case of learning by doing, trial and error. And so, step by step, a new passion began. And so it was that I returned to my grandfather's carpenter's bench – not his actual bench, but one in a quite similar location. My little atelier, my workshop."

Passion in her voice, she told me: "Finally, I returned to the dreams of my childhood and have become a miniature artist." At first it was just a hobby, but her skills rapidly advanced and soon she was creating very fine quality work – chests with drawers that open on little runners, and carved cabinets with beautiful glazed doors. So superb are her creations that since 2018 she has been selling them to collectors worldwide. People are very proud to own a piece from the atelier of Pipi Turner.

I love how her painted pieces have a patina of age, which she carefully and accurately reproduces at small scale. It is this attention to detail that makes her work so realistic.

I asked Pipi typically how long it takes to make a piece of furniture. There is no definitive answer: "The time it takes depends on the item, but it can take up to four weeks. I'm a perfectionist and will keep working on a miniature until it looks perfect to me. That can be a hindrance, and sometimes an object doesn't go on sale because I don't think it's good enough!"

If you would like one of Pipi's perfect pieces, check out her website:

www.miniatures-atelier-pipiturner.de. On her Instagram page you can see her furniture as it takes shape – drawings, cut pieces, items in various stages of assembly, and also the exquisite finished pieces fit to grace the most special miniature homes. Take a peek for yourself at Pipi's perfect pieces! 🏠

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Miniature biscuit cupcakes

"Custard Creams and Bourbon biscuits are such a teatime staple, that I could not refrain from making my own versions of them in miniature to adorn my miniature tables. I choose to sculpt my own little versions of them, thus giving my work its own, distinctive look; and in this case that homemade feel I love so much!" Maive



YOU WILL NEED

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- White, translucent, yellow, dark brown and scrap polymer clay
- Liquid polymer clay
- Smooth ceramic tile to sculpt and bake your pieces on
- Two-part silicone mould putty
- Soft pastels in beige
- Water-based gloss varnish
- Water-based matte varnish
- Beige, brown and white acrylic paint

TOOLS REQUIRED

- Miniature cupcake mould
- Toothbrush
- Blades/Craft knife
- Needle tool (or another pointy tool)
- Small flat chisel silicone sculpting tool
- Small embossing tools
- Pasta machine or acrylic rolling pin
- Tweezers
- Small paintbrushes



1 To make the Custard Cream style biscuits, take some scrap clay and roll out a thin sheet. Cut out a small rectangle and add texture with a toothbrush.



2 Take a pointy tool, or a tiny embossing tool, and trace a diamond shape in the centre of the biscuit. Then hollow it out a little bit.

Maive's Top Tip!

"The point is to create the illusion of a pattern that evokes that of the real biscuits, not about creating an exact replica. So go with what feels right to you."



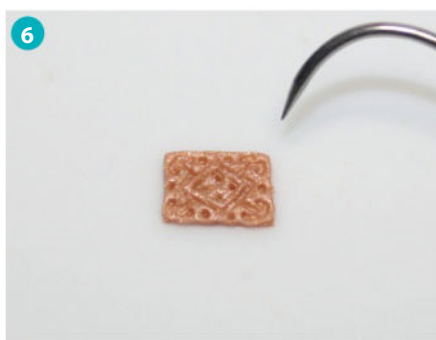
3 Use a needle tool to trace a line around the diamond.



4 Trace a short line from the centre of each side of the diamond pointing at the corners of the biscuit.



5 Poke two dots on either side of the lines and carefully join the two with curved lines. Poke another dot on either side of these shapes.



6 Finally, poke four dots in the centre of the diamond. Part-bake the Custard Cream style biscuit for 20 minutes and once cool, make a mould with the silicone mould putty.



7 Take your cupcake moulds and fill them with dark brown clay for the Bourbon style cupcakes and a mix of translucent and light-yellow clay for the Custard Cream style ones. Add more clay on the top and texture with a toothbrush. Part-bake for 20 minutes.



8 To make the Bourbon style biscuits, roll out a thin sheet of dark brown polymer clay and cut out tiny rectangles. You'll need two for each biscuit. Add texture with a toothbrush and use a pointy tool to poke a pattern of dots on all of them.



9 Once your Custard Cream style biscuit mould is ready, make some biscuits using the same mix you used for the cupcakes and brush a little beige soft pastel on them to highlight the pattern. Part-bake all the biscuits for 20 minutes.



10 Once your cupcakes are baked and cool, take some beige acrylic paint and mix it with a little water. Paint the Custard Cream style cupcakes two thirds of the way or so and let dry. You can repeat this step to enhance the colour or add a little brown paint to the base. Use the same beige to paint the edges of the sponge. For the chocolate cupcakes, mix brown and white acrylic paint and apply this to the ridges on the cupcake liners. For the Custard Cream style cupcakes, use white or a very light beige. Let them dry completely.



11 Take your cool Custard Cream style biscuit lids and add a small rectangle of white clay to one of them. Use a small silicone flat chisel tool to shape it and press the other biscuit lid on top.

Maives's Top Tip!

"Polymer clay softens while baking, so the buttercream needs to be of a firm consistency or the biscuits (and the buttercream itself) will shift during baking. To get that 'swirly' look, apply the buttercream with a ball tool in a circular motion"



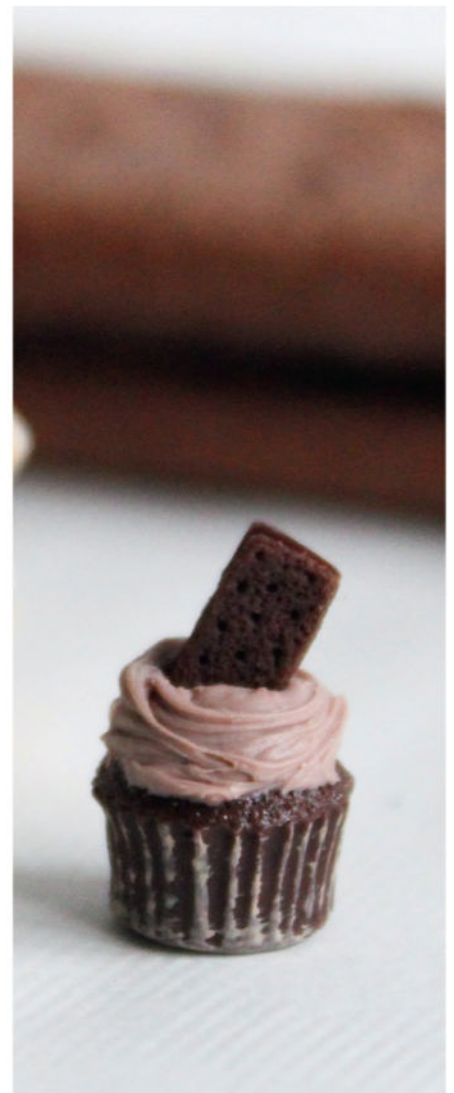
12 For the Bourbon style biscuits, mix white clay with dark brown to obtain a mousse-like colour and use this to make the filling (you can also use a lighter brown for the biscuit part and a dark brown for the filling) Assemble all the biscuits and bake all for another 10 minutes.



13 Take the same mousse colour you used for the Bourbon style biscuit filling and mix it with liquid polymer clay to a creamy consistency. Spread this mixture on the chocolate cupcakes and before adding the biscuits, trim them at an angle. Repeat with the Custard Creams using a mix of white polymer clay and liquid polymer clay, add the biscuits (I did not need to trim these). Bake the cupcakes for 30 minutes.



14 Once the cupcakes were baked and cool, I dry brushed a little beige acrylic paint on the Custard Cream style biscuits to further highlight the pattern. Glaze the cupcake sponges with gloss varnish and the liners and Custard Cream style biscuits with matte varnish. Now your Custard Cream and Bourbon style biscuit cupcakes are complete! 🏠



INFO

View more of Maive's work on her Instagram:
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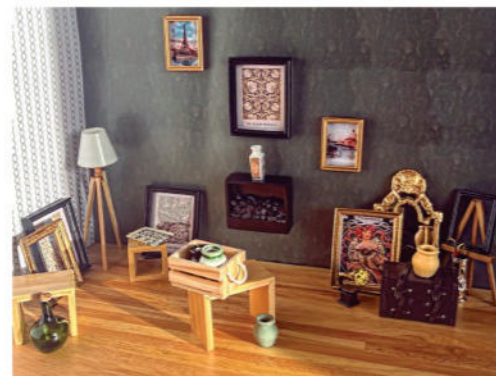
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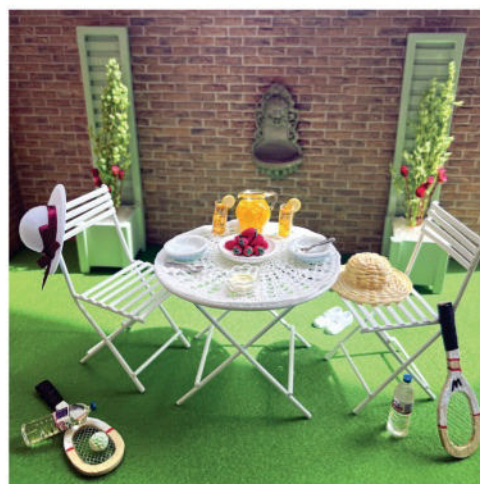
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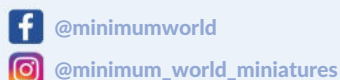


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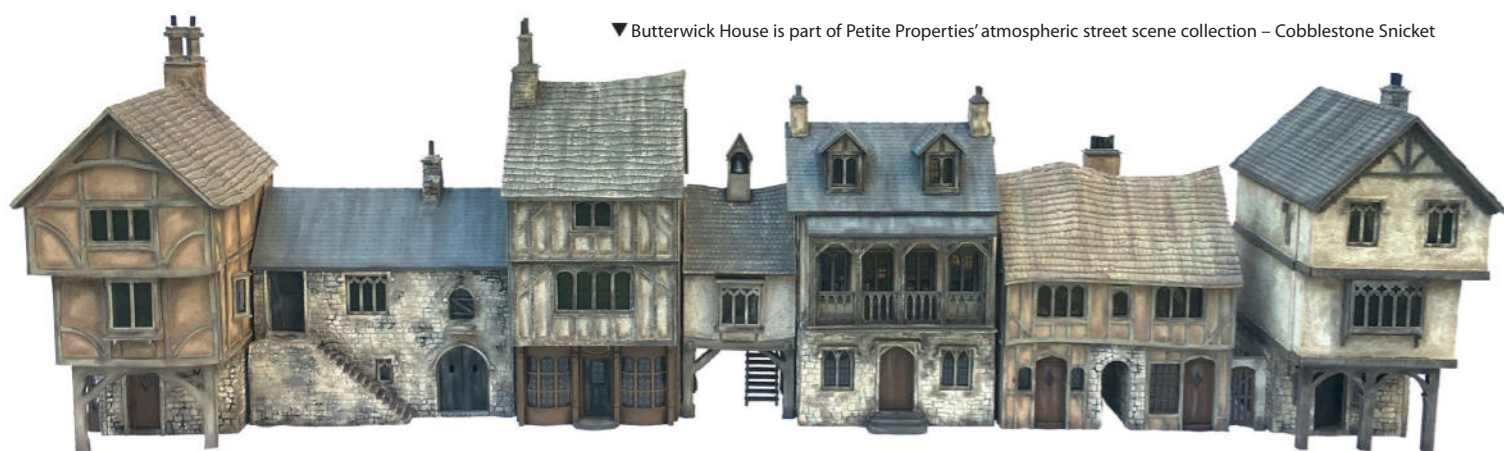
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At Home with THE BROADWOODS



NEW YEAR, NEW MINIATURE PROJECT?

With the help from fellow miniaturist and Petite Properties' Modelling Community member Avril Burdett, this month professional miniaturist Bea Broadwood shares why this time of year is just perfect for taking the plunge on learning a new skill or to start planning an exciting new miniature project.



▼ Butterwick House is part of Petite Properties' atmospheric street scene collection – Cobblestone Snicket

Over the years, I have made it no secret that I love New Year. There is something cathartic about the arrival of 1st January and the shiny new year it heralds in. At this time of year, we often consider giving something up, but after the gloom of the last few years, maybe instead of giving something up, we should be thinking about starting something new? January can be a dreary month, but its short, cold days also present the perfect opportunity to put your feet up and begin to plan a new project or learn a new skill.

At this time of year, I spend a lot of time pouring over my note and sketch books, to help me finalise just what PP will be launching in the year ahead, but when faced with a blank page, getting started can be more difficult than you think. I often find that I have too many projects that I want to work on and drafting up a realistically do-able design schedule is something that I find challenging. But even when I am faced with a long list of new design ideas, physically getting going can be a challenge... and it seems I am not alone!

Following an interesting thread on Petite Properties' Modelling Community forum on Facebook, member Avril Burdett shared not only her imaginative quarter scale kit bash, but also her thoughts and advice of where to find a spark of inspiration in the first place. So, as the twinkle of Christmas is boxed up and heads back into the loft for another year, why not take Avril's advice and grab your notepad and pen and start planning your next big miniature creation? *Bea.*

Where do I start?

You hear this question asked so many times on the dolls house and modellers' forums. It's like sitting staring at the blank sheet of paper when you had an essay to write in school or persuading yourself to get past your knees in the seas of the British coast!

Inspiration wise, it might start when you pick up your first Petite Properties kit, which you may dive into straight away or leave whilst you pluck up courage to start. It may start with a link, that house you used to pass on your way to school, the creepy B&B

you stayed in on summer holidays, a favourite film, Grandma and Grandpa's old cottage. You can always find a Petite Properties kit to use as the foundation for your vision, and fear not, the instructions are very clear and easy to follow and you don't need a cupboard full of expensive tools to do this.

I do both, Bea's beautifully designed buildings will spark an idea. I buy one, can't wait to receive it and I get started straight away. But, for example I bought Turrin Castle and base as soon as

▼ Turrin Castle in quarter scale





▲ Avril's old inn in 1/48th scale



▲ Avril has brought the interior to life using a variety of printed wall finishes and a whole lot of imagination!

it came out and it's still in the cupboard, not because it was an impulse buy and I've lost interest, but I'm in the process of information gathering. I love National Trust and English Heritage properties and I'm blessed with being able to travel around the UK looking at stately homes and castles, (which it's also worth noting that you can now do virtually on-line). I take lots of photos and store them in a folder on my iPad, I've looked at castle interiors and (full scale) tapestries on

Pinterest and have a saved box for them. But I'm not ready to start yet! I've also got fabric samples and wallpaper samples and the ideas are coming together. Sometimes I don't know what I'm looking for, but I'll know when I see it and my quarter scale castle will then become reality, meantime I'm having great fun in the plotting-what-to-do stage.

"Sometimes when you are planning a new project you need to think outside the box and kit bashing is a great way to adapt

and personalise an existing kit. Last year, when Avril wanted to create an old inn, she decided that not one, but three identical PP kits would be needed for her unique project."

Bea

I have an old inn, (era not historically defined or accurate!) which I made up of three Butterwick House kits fastened together. The inspiration came from a street in Chester, which has a beautiful run of similar buildings. Adapting the kits made my model



Avril used felt to create her thatched roof

unique and no one else's. It's something to do online on cold wet days and something to focus on when out and about. Researching for a new project really makes you notice details of the architecture around you.

Kit bashing the Black Swan Inn wasn't too difficult, I had to adjust the roof as each individual one has an overhang each side, so I had to saw some off! As I decided to use felt for the thatch, I kept the whole roof in one section which led to me having to make several adjustments. I loved making my inn, especially bringing it to life with the furnishings after I had got through the tricky

bits. I'm really pleased with it but I keep looking at the thatch and wondering how I could do it better. I'm my own worst critic!

Each of my finished dolls houses and those awaiting my attention, has a back story, I may or may not light it, I may or may not furnish it, I may or may not have people in it, but I know the life stories of those who live there, they're not just wood, cardboard and glue, they're a memory, a dream or an aspiration. So, to answer my original question, 'Where do I start?', the answer is anywhere!

Avril Burdett



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www.facebook.com/groups/petiteproperties

National Trust Website:

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Operation Mini-Move!



Moi Ali has just moved house – or should that be houses?!
Something many readers will relate to at some point!



▲ Carefully supervise removal men

Moving house is stressful enough without having to move a dozen of them all in a day! But that's exactly what I've just done. Yup, I moved big house and so had to move all of my little houses too, into my new home.

It's quite a worry moving treasured miniatures without damaging or losing precious objects en route. But it can be done! Whether you're moving a solo dolls house or an entire miniature property portfolio, here's how to organise a trouble-free mini move, based on my own recent experience.

First of all, well ahead of the big day, start collecting small boxes into which you can pack your treasured items. If possible, try to find boxes small enough to fit into the

rooms in your dolls house, yet big enough to hold the contents of each room. You can then pack items room by room and not be in a terrible muddle as to what went where when it's time to unpack.

Give your dolls houses a good clean as you don't want to transport dust to your new home and it's amazing how dusty a dolls house can get! Clean inside and out, as corners and ledges can be little dust traps. Also, clean individual items if they need it. I find that large make up brushes are perfect, as they are soft on delicate items. Just buy cheap ones from a pound store or similar. Beware using the vacuum cleaner in case you inadvertently suck up a treasured piece!

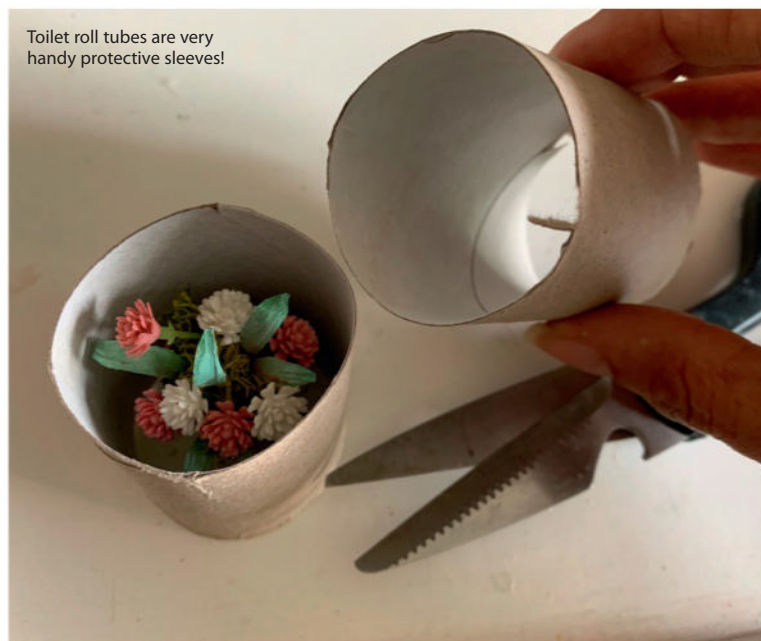
If you have a lot of dolls houses, as I do, take photos of each room so that you remember how to put it all back together. This is especially important if you cannot pack items into separate boxes inside each room.

Then start packing, room by room. If you have objects held down with tacky wax – particularly pieces that might work loose such as pictures or furniture, or fragile ornaments, carefully remove the tacky wax then pack each item. Furniture can be protected by wrapping in bubble wrap. Smaller pieces are best wrapped in tissue paper, kitchen towel or even loo roll – items such as vases, for example. Talking of toilet roll, the cardboard tube inside is great for protecting fragile 📦





Wrap up China pieces



Toilet roll tubes are very handy protective sleeves!



Remove it if it might get knocked off

items such as flower displays and garden planters with flowers. Cut the tube to size to form a protective sleeve.

If you have managed to find boxes the right size for each room, place the packed box in the appropriate room and to stop it sliding about, pack bubble wrap or scrunched up magazine pages into the room to keep the packed box in place (avoid newspaper as the newsprint may come off onto wallpaper). If the boxes won't fit inside the room, remember to label them so you know which room and which dolls house they came from.

Remove anything that is easily removable and may fall off and break, or get lost – such as chimney stacks and/or chimney pots, weather vanes and so on. Also check that none of your windows is in danger of dropping out. I know quite a few miniaturists don't glue their windows in situ, preferring to use tacky wax or double-sided tape to secure them. This is fine if your dolls house is going nowhere, but risky if it's to be carried.

Finally, wrap each dolls house in several rounds of bubble wrap to protect it in transit. As a final touch, secure the bubble wrap with 'fragile' tape so your removal people know it's delicate – but tell them this too. Impress upon them just how easily damaged it is and that it must be handled with great care.

If possible, consider transporting the dolls houses yourself in your own car. That way you can take special care, but please note that a 1/12th scale dolls house is pretty heavy so you will need help – not just two people to carry it, but another to direct and look out for hazards when getting it to and from the car (through doors, along narrow hallways, 

Wrap furniture in bubble wrap



Take out loose windows and doors



Find boxes to fit in rooms and check they will hold everything then pack the boxes



Old chocolate boxes are great for transporting your tiny items

“Chocolate boxes are great for holding small, delicate pieces safely. If you don’t have such boxes, visit a classy chocolatier, buy a box of something delicious, scoff the lot and then fill the empty trays with minis. It’s an important part of the house move!”

around corners or upstairs). Treat it as a military operation.

Think ahead and identify where you want each dolls house to go – and measure up so you know it will fit. Bear in mind nearby electrical sockets if your house is electrified. Also beware spaces that are in full sun, as you don’t want your paintwork to fade. Extremes of temperature are also no good for a dolls house, as they can warp, so avoid places like conservatories that can be too hot in summer and too cold in winter. Moisture is also to be avoided.

If your dolls house is simply plonked down in the middle of a room during the move, it may get damaged, so find a safe space where your houses can hide until everything is sorted elsewhere in the big house. You can then put them in their final resting place and start unpacking them.

You might want to consider insurance for the move. Your removal company will be insured, so check what is covered (often there is a maximum amount per item) and see if you need to take out your own insurance to supplement this. Most dolls houses probably don’t merit this, but if you have a very expensive bespoke dolls house, then give it serious consideration. Think how much it would cost you to replace it were it to be dropped or bashed. If your collection is especially valuable – including sentimentally – you may want to engage a specialist removal company specialising in moving fragile and delicate objects.

It’s a daunting task moving home if you’re a miniature collector, but so long as you plan carefully and pack carefully, everything should arrive in tip top condition at your new home – and I guarantee you, unpacking will be a lot easier than with your full-size possessions – I’m still tripping over boxes weeks after my move! 📦



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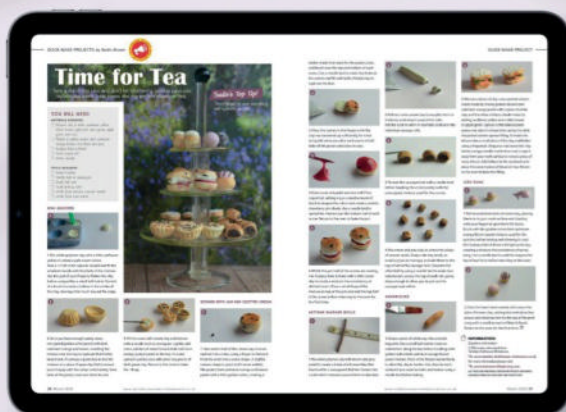
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Get to know artisans through EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS!



This amazing structure of 'Kathie's Castle' is an American commission by Brian Long, who takes us on a guided tour through this captivating building in the February 2010 issue of Dolls House & Miniature Scene.



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CHRISTOPHER ROBIN NORDSTROM, AKA @TOKYOBUILD



Scandinavia meets urban Tokyo in this month's Instagram Identities, when Moi Ali chats to Christopher Robin Nordstrom, AKA @tokyobuild.

When I visited the 'Small is Beautiful' exhibition in London last year, I was particularly captivated by some Japanese (or so I thought) miniature buildings. They were so accurate in every detail. Little did I know that the maker, known as @tokyobuild on Instagram, was Swede Christopher Robin Nordstrom, who lives on the southern island in Stockholm called Södermalm. That's an awfully long way from Tokyo!

When I spoke to Christopher, I had to start with the obvious question: why urban, slightly grubby Tokyo miniatures? Surely a Swede would opt for quaint Scandinavian interiors inspired by Karin and Karl Larsson, or even mass-produced IKEA chic? Christopher explained: "It all started after my first visit to Tokyo in 2018, a city I had wanted to visit since I was 12 years old. It was fantastic! I was really struck by how small the city felt, and yet how enormous it was at the same time. I was also really intrigued by those small houses that were no more than 40 square meters of living space."



Rubbish, leaves... it's all included.



Etched brass is a favourite material



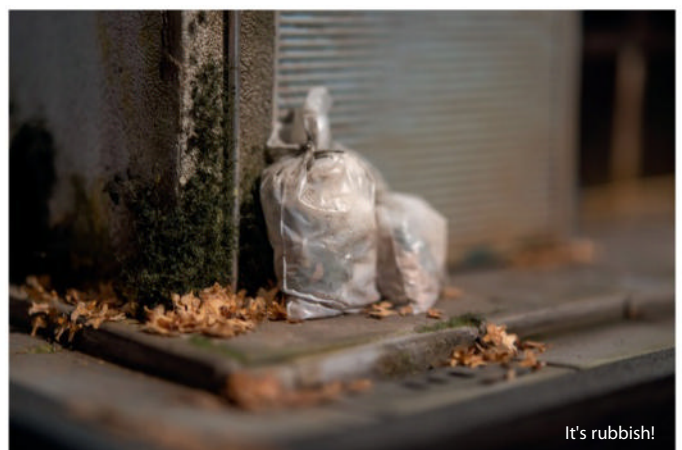
Make mine mini



Diminutive door!

Christopher continued to explain the fascination: "Back home in Stockholm, I was spending too many nights paralysed in front of Netflix as soon as the kids were asleep! I needed a new interest, so I decided to try and make models of the Tokyo houses I'd been so inspired by on my recent trip. It was the perfect hobby to do at the kitchen table. I've now visited Tokyo four times, such is my passion for the city, and I really do feel at home there."

He went on: "I really love architecture in general, but the ordinary, commonplace and yet almost forgotten architecture is especially interesting. I am fascinated by houses that have been mended, extended, or in other ways modified over time and according to need. That is what I want to highlight in my miniatures: the life of the houses. And how they decay and sometimes even die. These types of rundown buildings are still pretty common in Tokyo. And if you are interested in Star Wars and Blade Runner, then Tokyo is as close you can get. Sometimes even a bit too close!" 🏠



It's rubbish!

I asked Christopher whether he relied for source material on photos taken on his trips to Japan. "Partly," he responded, "but I also take virtual 'walks' in Google street-view and just stroll around different Tokyo neighbourhoods looking for houses that catch my eye. Homes on corners tend to attract me, or ones where the neighbouring structure has been demolished. That allows me a better view. All buildings have something that is interesting if you look with the right eyes. But I do try to find structures that represent the Tokyo I like so much. Details, textures, colours, composition, character... all those things are important. I like buildings with a story, ones that have been time fixed up, rebuilt, altered or just left to age and weather."

There speaks a true artist, to whom a miniature model is a 3D creative artwork. The colour, composition, proportion and perspective all have to be right. Detail too. Christopher has such an eye for detail. He perfectly captures peeling paint, dirty facades, rusted metal shutters, external wiring conduits, air-conditioning units, graffiti... everything is carefully observed and convincingly recreated in small scale. ▶



Part-way through a build



Work in progress



Electricity meters add realism

Bespoke air-con unit

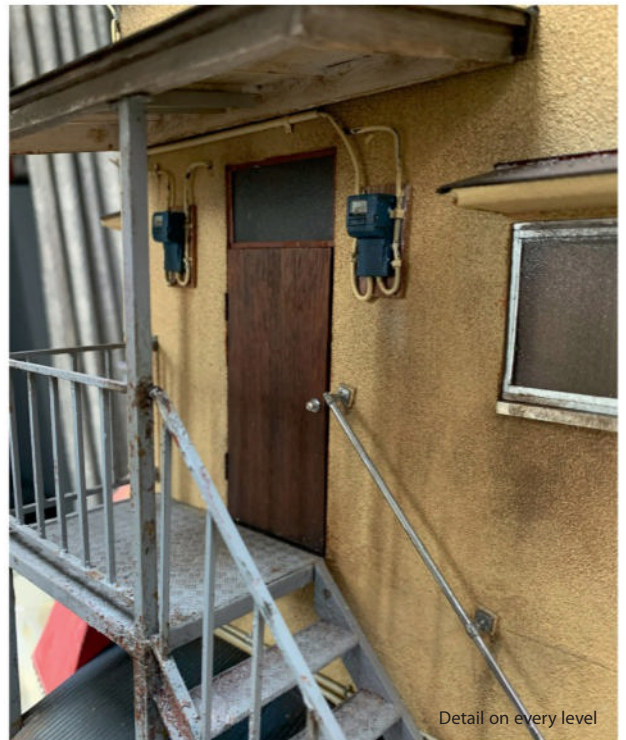


Every detail is included





Adding authentic detail



Detail on every level



Every wall has a feature

With such artistic talent evident in his work, it was clear that his professional background was in a creative arena. I was right! "I'm a fully trained furniture designer, but I have also been educated in fine arts. I now work mostly as a freelance designer for brands such as the Swedish store H&M. For the last 12 years, I have mostly designed bags, everything from kids' backpacks to women's handbags."

Aside from his day job designing bags, Christopher takes commissions for bespoke miniatures in his signature style.

He also undertakes other model-making assignments, including architectural models for architects' firms, and freelance product design commissions. One day he would like to work exclusively on miniatures, his passion.

I asked about any unusual commissions: "I had a really fun commission a couple of years ago from two street art artists who had squatted in three different abandoned buildings here in Stockholm as a kind of living art installation. They asked me to build models of the buildings for an exhibition.

It was such a fun project making really cool buildings in miniature. I'm always open to interesting commissions."

I wanted to know how Christopher approaches a miniature build, and in particular, how to create such convincing accessories on his buildings – gas meters, for example, which are clearly bespoke and not off-the-shelf items. He told me: "I'm no stranger to any technique. I do 3D printing, casting, etching, sculpting... whatever I think will work best for what I am making. Quite often I will 3D print an item such as an

Everything made from scratch



electric meter, then make a silicone mould of it. That way, I can cast as many as I need for use in other builds at a later date. The base structure of my models is MDF board. To get the texture on the walls, I glue sandpaper to the MDF. Every build is a mix of so many techniques. My favourite technique is photo etching in brass, as you can get very fine details this way."

Unusually, Christopher uses the non-standard scale of 1/20th. This really intrigued me, as the regular 1/12th or 1/24th would open up a whole world of commercial miniatures that he could incorporate. "No," he explained, "that is why I choose 1/20th! I want to work in a scale that is not commercially available, precisely so I can't cheat and buy ready-made details. Everything has to be made from scratch. Oh, and 1/20th is an easy scale to calculate!"

I am fortunate enough to have visited Japan, but never Tokyo. Having been inspired Christopher's work, I shall make the trip. Perhaps the Tokyo Tourist Board should commission him! It certainly worked with me! 🏠

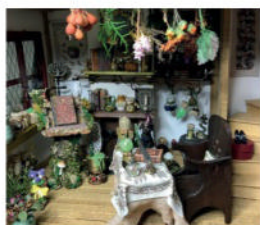
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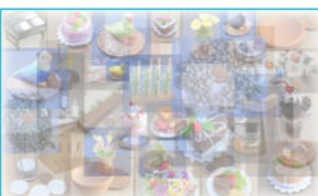
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Bottled gardens

Learn how you can create tiny ecosystems inside terrariums in all shapes and sizes...

The Chinese and Japanese have long practiced the ancient and beautiful art of making miniature gardens and landscapes with penjing and bonsai. In Britain, a Western take on the idea began in 1829 when Dr Nathaniel B. Ward noticed fern and grass growing from the soil in a sealed jar that he stored insects in. His accidental discovery led to the terrarium in which small items of the natural world are grown and displayed in a glass container, creating a tiny ecosystem.

Being a natural type of diorama, a terrarium (not the glass tank habitat for reptiles) brings a connection to mother nature indoors and has many creative possibilities. They range from gardens in small jars or bowls to Wardian cases

which look like a miniature greenhouse.

Before making a terrarium, you need to consider the shape and size of glass container, plants and garden design, whether you want a dry or aquatic one, and what maintenance you're prepared to do. You'll also need tools that could include a funnel for pouring soil, sand or water into the right place – this could be a simple homemade one using paper and tape. Brushes can be used to remove debris from plant leaves, tongs to position plants and remove dead leaves, and a scoop is useful for handling soil and gravel.

The choice of container and its size will depend on what type of plants you intend

to display. An open vessel like a fish bowl will be needed for air plants, but beware that they need special care if placed in a tall cylinder. Lidded jars are another option, apart from hermetically sealed ones which are likely to cause fungus growth on the plants. Even fruit bowls and covered cake stands can be pressed into use! An alternative is a hanging vessel which come in various shapes such as a globe, teardrop, cylinder or pyramid. A hanging terrarium has the advantage that it can be placed in areas where there isn't shelf or table space, and they can look more decorative.

A Wardian case imbues an elegant, classical look to a terrarium. Typically, they have a tray in which the display is set and an opening glass pane which is ideal for releasing condensation.

Another vintage option is a cloche: a bell jar for covering a plant.

Once you've picked a vessel then it's time to work on the garden design. The main constituents of a terrarium are gravel, soil or sand, activated charcoal, moss and plants. This is only a general rule since it will depend on the choice of ecosystem. You may not be interested in moss, and a desert landscape of cacti may only need gravel, sand and cactus plants. Also consider whether the terrarium is for a special event such as Valentine's Day, Halloween or Christmas as that would require additional decoration. Miniature ornaments and figurines will help to bring these displays to life. After the event they can easily be repurposed back into an everyday terrarium. ➡



◀ A clean design Aztec Cube terrarium using white gravel
Credit: www.theurbanbotanist.co.uk, Creative Commons CC BY 2.0





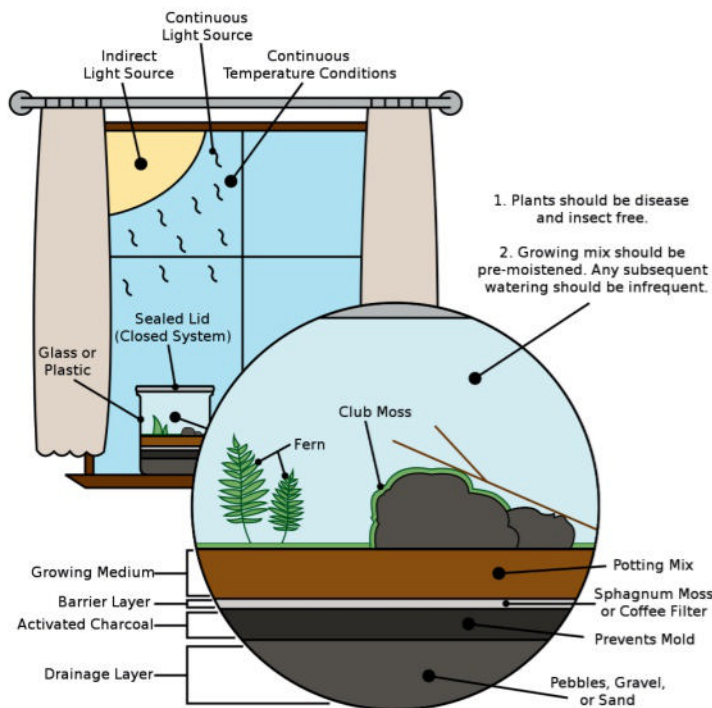
Terrariums can be fun, like these faux terrarium dioramas with a gnome and animals
 Credit: Natalia Wilson, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.0



A fun terrarium with a mock pond and different layers of gravel visible
 Credit: Mokkie, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0



Terrarium in a lidded jar with a small branch, hedgehog skull, moss and drosera plants
 Credit: Plantlover93, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0



▲ Terrariums exhibited at the Philadelphia Flower Show in 2016
Credit: Laura Blanchard, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.0

◀ Diagram showing the setup of a typical terrarium
Credit: Nolan Jensen, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0

When you have everything ready to start making your terrarium the first layer to be laid down is the drainage well. This typically consists of gravel, sand, bark chips or soil. Besides thinking about the most suitable drainage material, don't forget what it looks like from the outside. Activated charcoal placed above the drainage material

helps to purify against mould and fungus. A thin permeable divider between that and the potting layer is recommended to improve the appearance – usually paper or cheesecloth.

On top of these base layers goes the potting mix which will depend on the plants you're using. Finally, the most creative

and fun element is the planting. It's best to experiment with the layout on a work bench before committing your plants to the vessel because it's easy to move them around a bench first. This also gives you the chance to remove debris and trim root balls if necessary. After planting and watering you may want to do some topdressing. If this appeals, then over the potting mix you can add gravel, moss, bark and even mini ornaments like a bench.

A further choice of design is a water-based ecosystem in an aquatic terrarium. This is a good choice for anyone who wants indoor



▲ People taking part in a terrarium making activity at the College of San Mateo in California
Credit: CSM Library, Creative Commons CC BY 2.0



▲ Cleaning moisture from the inside of a terrarium jar is necessary maintenance. Credit: Jungle Rebel, Creative Commons CC BY 2.0



A plant odyssey terrarium that looks like a well tended miniature garden
Credit: brewbooks, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.0



▲ A modern Wardian case containing carnivorous plants
Credit: Jennifer Balaco, Creative Commons CC BY 2.0



▲ A pine cone terrarium decorated with lights for Christmas
Credit: www.theurbanbotanist.co.uk, Creative Commons CC BY 2.0

plants without having to water them. It's crucial to select small plants which can grow in fresh water but won't outgrow the vessel. Ideally you should use distilled water since the minerals in tap water may form an unsightly limescale crust on the inside of the glass, especially if you live in a hard water area.

One of the pleasures of a finished terrarium is that it can be enjoyed with minimal maintenance. Depending on your choice of plants some care activities may be required, if only a little watering. The right balance of moisture must be maintained, so airing or

cleaning off excess moisture from the glass interior (lidded fish bowls tend to sweat) will probably be necessary once in a while.

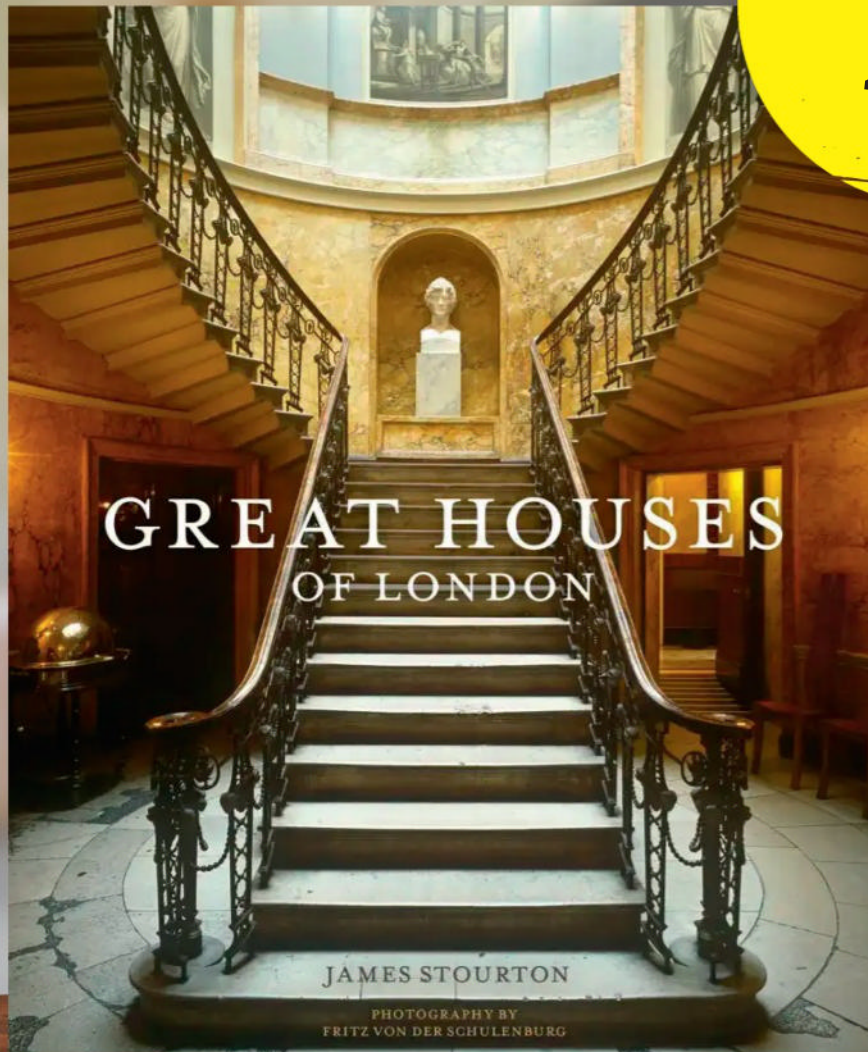
Bear in mind that leaves can die and shed from certain plants, so are best removed when this happens. Also, watch out for fungus and various types of bugs since an infected plant may need to be replaced. A terrarium is unlikely to get an infestation of mealybugs, but if you notice a white cotton-like substance on a plant, including the undersides, then get rid of them using a suitable swab soaked in

rubbing alcohol. Tongs are a useful tool for this care and attention.

If you're inspired to make a terrarium, then there are many books on the subject giving step-by-step instructions and design advice. Also, there are how-to videos on YouTube and discussion forums on the Internet where you can join a community of like-minded people to ask for and share advice and tips. Terrariums are a wonderfully creative outlet, and an ideal source of indoor nature for those who live somewhere with no garden or window box. 🏡

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Ruth's MINITIPS

Ruth Flewelling Lesbirel continues her top tips and advice for what has worked (and not worked!) throughout her years of experience. This month, Ruth looks at how to keep your mini makes dust-free...

Photos by Stephen Lesbirel

Enjoying dust-free miniatures

I've been making and collecting miniatures for nearly 30 years, so by now I really have a lot of them! Over time, like everything else, they inevitably gather dust if not protected in some way. Now dusting in general is something I really hate to do. So, from the very beginning, I've tried to find ways to be able to see and enjoy my miniatures without the dust issue.

A few years back I made a scale replica of my aunt's general store, circa 1960, but never completed the dust protection that I had planned. My idea was to replicate the painted tin ceiling with four hanging bulb fixtures and then add the final end wall

with its large windows on either side of the recessed door, complete with a shop bell over it on the inside. Still a very good plan, since now I must dust every little detail within the store using make-up brushes and paintbrushes in various sizes, taking a few things out to wash, where possible!

My next iteration on minimizing dust seemed ingenious. I could make rooms or whole little scenes inside commonly available, sturdy cards photo storage boxes, which are generally about 8in by 11-1/2in by 4-1/4in deep (203mm x 292mm x 108mm). This made the roombox concept within reach for even the most modest of budgets. The boxes could be stacked for a modular dolls house or they could be covered with their lids and stored away in a small space. I called them Shoebox Scenes. This suited me very well for some time – I made movie themed boxes, travel themed ones, and even a January snowy scene with skaters, a snowman, mitts, and sleds seen through a large window over a cosy window seat.

There was even a 'steaming' cup of cocoa and I called it 'Inside, Looking Out'.

There was a limit to these boxes however, along with a finite size and set of proportions. By then I had read about and seen dolls houses that were completely enclosed and had hinged walls. With so much potential for creativity, these options were large and often very expensive. What if I bought one and later decided I'd rather have a different architectural style? Still the hinged wall concept really caught my attention. What if I applied that to a more modest structure? I decided to make a large 1/12th scale garden folly, which I called my backyard castle. It consists of a two-storey main building with its roof-top parapeted terrace, a spiral staircase in the tower and an apse, which hinges away from the main 'building' and contains a kitchen above and a bathroom below. Since it is kept closed, my only dust issue is the roof-top terrace, which is quite easy to keep clean.



▲ Irish spring



▲ Bermuda holiday



▼ Old general store



▲ Backyard castle exterior



▲ Apse opened back on its hinge

More structures followed, some of these with lift off roofs. Both the castle's apse and tower roofs lift off for better viewing and quite recently I made a She Shed. Not only do its doors, including a large double door open, but the entire roof lifts off. It's great for adding and arranging the furniture inside. The Jubilee Caravan (2022) is another recent miniature structure where the lift-off roof provides better viewing and arranging possibilities than the otherwise limited access of a single door. No dust issues with either of these structures!



She shed



▲ Football cases and domes

Serendipity led me to a real-life Georgian house museum, where I was an occasional guide for some years. The beautiful furniture just begged to be recreated in miniature and I soon had about 30 exquisite little pieces – everything from a dry sink to tall case clocks, a piano-organ to four poster and sleigh beds, sofas and chairs to cradles and cabinets for porcelain. Then I happened on (American) football display cases and domes. These football display cases were the perfect size to create whole rooms of this furniture. The top, ends, and front, all framed in wood, are glass and the back mirrored 'wall' could be hung with Georgian portraits or even servants' bells. Glass domes are wonderful for tall items with small footprints or even a small flock of felted sheep. I've arranged most of my domes and display cases on the shelves of a bank of three bookcases in the lower level of my house.

My Dad built my only complete dolls house, from a kit, in the early 1990s. Being so much

▼ Jubilee caravan

smarter than I am, he knew dust would be a problem before I realized it, so he had clear acrylic plexi-glass (Perspex) panels made for the back and open-sloped back roof. The vertical panels sit on wooden ledges held in place with turn-button catches, while the sloping ones rest atop them with additional plexi-glass pads on the inside of the lower corners, set back from the edge enough to fit the top edge of the lower panels. There are also small wooden stops at the edge, to the support these panels at the top and bottom of the slope. Since there are three sections to the dolls house, I have six plexi-glass panels, which do a very good job of keeping the dust out. These are easily removed and set back in place as needed. I applied this in a simpler way to my old one-room school house, sliding a specially cut sheet of plexi-glass between the overhanging L-shaped corner-boards.

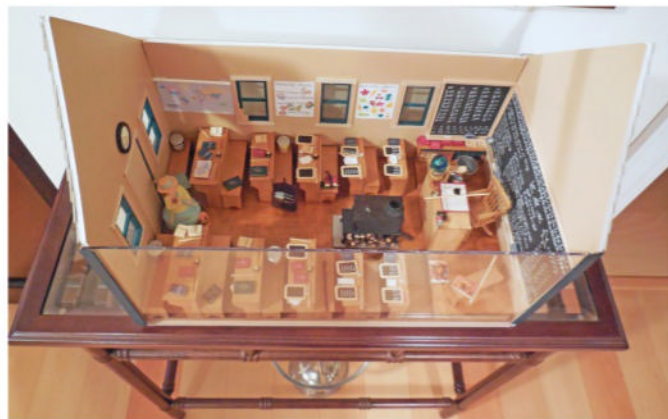
A simple solution for a small collection or a few very special pieces is a curio cabinet or shadow box. These come in a wide variety

▼ Bank of bookcases





▲ Dolls house front



▲ School house, roof off, showing plexi-glass front wall



▲ Long ago shot of dolls house back, with plexi-glass removed



▲ Glass curio cabinet



▲ Close-up of back showing panels, ledge, and turn-buttons



▲ Shadow box with flowers in basement



▶ Wooden floor cabinet

of sizes, shapes and styles, of course and can sit on a table top or even hang on a wall. I've used a small all-glass one for a few of my metamorphic miniatures and some flowers.

Another solution is a small cabinet, like this

one that I purchased for the purpose. It stands on the floor, has glass windows on the sides, and glass doors on the front. Mine holds a roombox and a Japanese garden, a play house, potting bench and sleigh, and several other

smaller pieces made over the years.

I hope this gives you some ideas for housing your miniatures in ways that still allow you to see and enjoy them, while keeping the upkeep to a minimum. 🏠



A family home

Escape to the mountains with Carol Kubrican as she brings the Eastern European folk art scene to small scale, opening the doors to the Carpathian Cottage.

The family connection

As a visual and literal storyteller, Carol Kubrican's beautiful 1/48th scale three storey Carpathian Cottage kits, brand new to the True2Scale collection, are steeped in the history and folklore of Eastern Europe. This century old cottage is home to a single occupant, Babka, who looks forward to a visit from her city dwelling grandchildren each summer. Here they spend idyllic days in the country, making memories to last a lifetime and discovering the traditional skills passed down through the generations. For Carol, whose husband Tomas is Slovakian,

the design of the Carpathian Cottage has deep meaning, with foundations built on her own memories and the experience of being lucky enough to explore this wonderful culture and style of architecture in person. "Over a period of 25 years, we've travelled through the region while visiting family," she explains. "During our trips, I photographed historical villages, studied items in folk museums, collected traditional pottery and

linens, and observed folk traditions. And of course, I had the perfect guide and translator to help me understand the culture!"

With its vibrant, colourful design reflective of the wonderful artwork and history found within the Carpathian region, Carol perfectly describes the cottage as a conglomeration of folklore, architecture, and imagination. "I wanted the house to highlight some of the beautiful folk art of the Carpathian Mountain region that stretches through the countries of Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, Hungary and Romania. Particularly appealing to me are the traditional arts ➡

► The Carpathian Cottage



Bee intrigued



Stepping up



Eastern European folk art in miniature

The sun shines outside the privy



of weaving, embroidery, pottery and painting done in those countries. So, I knew that I wanted to incorporate those subjects into the project. But I kept getting hung up on what the structure should look like." In the end, it was a summertime visit to Latvia back in 2021, and a day trip spent exploring the cottages dotted along the coastline, which helped Carol break that spell of indecision, sowing the seeds of inspiration behind the kit's design. "Many of them were ornate and well preserved. Soon after, I started sketching an idea for the cottage and brainstorming the things I wanted to include inside of the house," she recalls. "I came up with the story of Babka, which helped me to design the interior of the cottage. Babka, in my mind, is a very colourful character. So, she needed to have a bright and happy colour palette in her cottage to offset the dark things happening in the world at the moment."

Weaving creativity

That fabulous interior is furnished using a dedicated range of accessories designed by Carol, all of which are also available in kit form. Amongst the new pieces is an intricately detailed weaving loom. Having seen one or two weaving looms in 1/12th scale before, but unable to recall one in 1/48th, I was keen to discover just how complex this tiny kit was



▲ The heart of the home

to design and create. "I'm not crazy enough to try to create a working loom in 1/48th scale! So, I had to come up with a design that would be simple for miniaturists to build, and it also had to fool the eye. YouTube came to my rescue when I needed to learn how a floor loom functions so that I could approximate a working loom." At just 1 1/8in high, the final loom is a piece of art in itself. Textiles play a

vital role throughout the cottage, the rugs influenced by traditional designs woven in Ukraine. "The rugs play an important part in the design of the cottage because Babka weaves them on the loom in the attic," says Carol. "I've embellished the designs a bit, because that's Babka's preference." The fringed blue and green rugs, available as a standalone purchase amongst the accessories range



Traditional crafts
'loom' large

Weaving new ideas in 1/48th scale



Carol's tiny vintage style dolls



Leaving no stone unturned. Miniature stoneware



Spot the tiny dipper inside the honey pot



would work equally well in a variety of other settings, but was that always Carol's intention, allowing clients to incorporate some of the accessories for the Carpathian Cottage within different scenes? "All of the furnishings and accessories can be used in various settings. For example, how fun would it be to add great-grandmother's spinning wheel in an attic?" she suggests. "Some miniaturists are creating room scenes using the 'built-in' set of antique box beds. I designed a series of 3D printed jugs, crocks, dishes, boots, baskets, tiny doll toys, and more that miniaturists are using in various 1/48th scenes." The vintage style dolls are perhaps amongst the smallest of the accessories available, but with an outdoor privy and a pair of delightful resin bee skeps, the latter complete with wooden bench, the accessories also expand the range beyond the floral doors of the cottage. This provides a wonderful starting point to create your own garden environment, and Carol's own thoughtful exterior landscaping,

including trees and spring lambs is a fantastic source of inspiration. The window box flowers are a superb addition, visible from both inside and outside the cottage. Carol helpfully explains on her website that the flowers used within the scene are by Susan at SDK Miniatures who also supplies kits, offering even more flexibility when planning your own finishing touches.

The heart of the matter

The True2Scale range continually evolves, making Carol one of our most exciting designers. From an intricate gingerbread village to an artist's studio, and a beautiful Parisian bookshop taking its lead from the Suffragette movement of the 1920s, there's something to capture the imagination of every miniaturist. For Carol, however, it's clear that The Carpathian Cottage will always hold an important place in her heart. "This was a very special kit for me to create because the cottage has been a personal

project that has evolved over many years. It has been a fulfilling process to research, design, and finally see other miniature enthusiasts' eyes light up when they peek into the cottage!" Carol has also enjoyed the challenge of tackling a completely new style of miniature art. "This project helped to stretch my miniature design muscles. It really is a joy to see people's reactions to the cottage." To see the Eastern European folk art scene take root in small scale is an equal delight, and as the Carpathian Cottage comes in kit form, it's also going to be thrilling to watch those roots spread out across the globe as miniaturists enjoy putting their own spin on Babka's cottage. 🏠



INFO

Read Babka's story and get a glimpse into Carol's research behind the design of the Carpathian Cottage as part of a video tour on the True2Scale website:

www.true2scale.com/carpathian-cottage

What got you started?

Ruth Flewelling Lesbirel shares her story on what was a catalyst that started her joy of miniatures...

Friendly and me

Every miniaturist will invariably tell you the same thing: "I've always loved little things!" But if you dig a little deeper, there was for each person a unique catalyst that turned that initial love into a lifelong passion. For Narcissa Thorne, of the famed Thorne Rooms, it was a favourite uncle who travelled the world always bringing her back exquisite tiny pieces of miniature furniture or accessories. A tour of the White House in Washington, DC (USA) inspired the Zweifels to create a miniature version that could travel the country so thousands could visit the White House in miniature. Sir Neville Wilkinson's young daughter's fairy citing in Ireland inspired Titania's Palace, a 15 year labour of love in the Italian Renaissance style. For me, it was The Friendly Giant.



Thorne Room at the Art Institute of Chicago, USA (public domain)



Tara's Palace at Powerscourt, County Wicklow, Ireland, the replacement for Titania's Palace which was lost at auction to Denmark (Stephen Lesbirel)

"I truly wish all children in all countries could have met 'my' Friendly Giant who shaped my future into the world of miniatures"

As a child of the late 1950s, early 1960s in Canada, it was a huge event when we got our first black and white cabinet model television. I remember it vividly, although I was only about six at the time, the trunk lid of our 1957 Pontiac gaping wide to contain its huge cardboard box. It soon had pride of place in our living room and proceeded to open to us the world! True, we only got one station clearly and a second very snowy one, which we occasionally strained to watch. Forget VCRs or PVRs, DVDs or Blu-rays – it would be decades before they would arrive on the scene.

But we had the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) and that meant, to me at least, one very special show - The Friendly Giant! This was long, long before The Big Friendly Giant movie, or even the book. Times were much simpler then, but it

still seems to me to have been the perfect formula for a children's show. It was short (just shy of 14 minutes). It was magical (there was a giant, as well as a talking giraffe, and a talking rooster). It was gentle and well-mannered (he was a friendly giant, who was always polite and never intrusive). And it was educational (Friendly read storybooks of all kinds, showing us and commenting on the beautiful pictures.) There was always something to learn from his choices of books and there was music too. Often Friendly alone on his various recorders but sometimes with others, particularly Fiddle and Angie, cat puppets on perfectly scaled musical instruments.

But I'm ahead of myself. Where the magic started was with the camera slowly panning across a model railroad scale outdoor scene – sometimes a farm (my favourite), sometimes a town, a fishing village, a forest, the seaside, and Friendly's soothing voice describing what was going on "today" in this scene. As I viewed the scene and listened to Friendly, I was sure he was speaking exclusively to me. I became engrossed in noticing each described detail, and the camera panned slowly to Friendly's tall boot as he knelt on one knee beside the scene, "There's that boot". After drawing our attention to his boot, Friendly invited us to, "look up, waaaaa up". As the camera panned upwards to his smiling face, his monologue always ended with, "We're on our way to the castle; I'll hurry over first and go in the back door, so I can let down the drawbridge, and open the big front doors for you. Are you ready? Here's my castle." Now a flourish on a harp and the gentle strains of 'Early One Morning', played on Friendly's recorder and indeed there appeared on my TV screen a castle, somewhat Scottish in design with its conical tower roofs! The drawbridge descended with no apparent help from anyone and revealed Friendly's name spelled out across the big front doors, which opened inwards, and we had arrived at the castle.

And finally, here's my catalyst. Friendly set to work arranging perfectly scaled miniature chairs in front of a stone fireplace against the castle's stone wall. There was a glowing, flickering fire on and Friendly was saying, "Here's one little chair for one of you, a big armchair for two more to curl up in, and for someone who likes to rock (this was me!), a rocking chair in the middle." He placed it in front of the fire and rocked it gently with his enormous hand and I mentally took my place in that rocking chair for a much anticipated story. There was also a castle picture over

the mantel, a bookcase full of books, a round pedestal table, and a Welsh dresser full of porcelain and pewter in the little 'room' setting. What remains so clearly in my mind today were those little chairs arranged on the small carpet before the fire.



▲ Friendly's Castle – CBC Museum via Wikipedia (public domain)

"Look up, waaaaa up, and I'll call Rusty. Rusty? Rusty?" and the camera panned up once again, passed the tall boots and crenelated tunic hem to Friendly's kindly face as he turned to a book bag hanging

on the opposite side of an arched stone castle window. Rusty, the hand puppet rooster, emerged from the top of the drawstring book bag to greet Friendly and they talked about the scene Friendly had just visited. Friendly then asked Rusty about Jerome – Rusty generally had some news about his whereabouts. Friendly whistled out the window for Jerome, who whistled back before loping into view at the window. Jerome, was a giraffe hand, or more accurately, arm puppet! He was always very happy-go-lucky and given to spontaneous dancing, harmonica playing, and occasional singing, especially when the show centered on a concert. Rusty was a bit more serious and studious (it happens when you live in a book bag) and he played the harp, or sometimes the guitar or piano accordion.

Music was a part of every episode but in truth, I liked the storybooks even better than the concerts, although both were excellent. Friendly would relate the opening scene, on the farm or in the town or other location, to Jerome and then say how it reminded him of a particular story. Rusty would disappear down into the book bag, a cloth bag with the drawstring top, to retrieve the book and then Friendly would read the story in his own pleasantly unhurried and descriptive way. Magic! The concerts were also a wonder, introducing young viewers to every genre from Elizabethan madrigals to the classics, jazz to soft pop. There were raccoon

▼ My rendition of Friendly's fireplace scene (Stephen Lesbirel)



musicians too, who played a recorder and a bassoon, it seems to me. My attention was really fixed on Friendly though. The music was always uplifting – my only problem was that it made the short programme seem even shorter! I became immersed in the storybooks and they seemed to extend the scant quarter hour, maybe because I continued to think about them even after the show was over.

There might be a little discussion about the book when it was done but all too soon, Friendly would say, "It's late", bid Jerome and Rusty goodbye, and the camera followed his hand back down to the miniature scene with the chairs around the fireplace. "This little chair will be waiting for one of you, and the rocking chair for someone who likes to rock, and the big armchair for two more to curl up in, when you come again to my castle. I'll close the big front doors and pull up the drawbridge after you've gone." I reluctantly 'left' my chair and stood across the miniature room watching as he put the chairs back in their original places, "Good-bye. Good-bye." And he turned his open hand to the camera in a gesture of farewell. Now the castle reappeared but the sky is dark, the moon rises, a cow not quite smoothly jumps over the moon, to the strains of 'Early One Morning' again. Credits roll (and sometimes the picture on our TV rolled!). And that was the programme, until tomorrow.

The whole tone of the program was



▲ Bob Homme as a young man with the little chairs (University of Houston Digital Library – public domain)

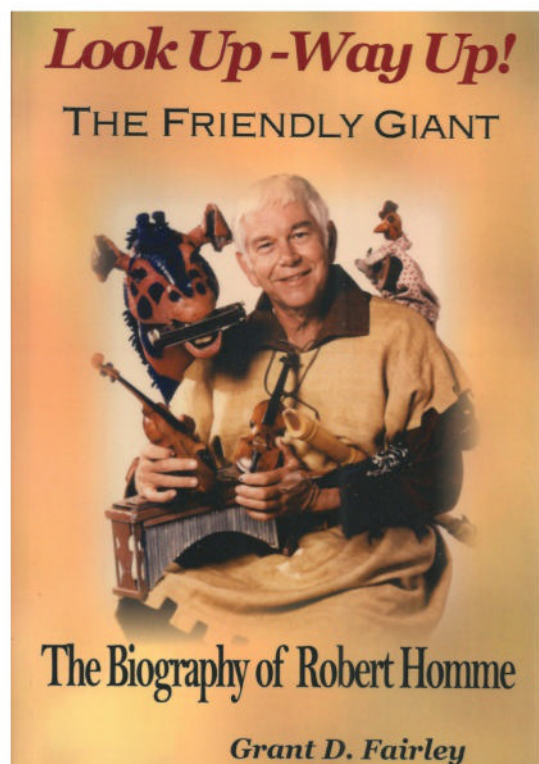
gentle and warm. Thousands of us still wax nostalgic at the mention of any of Friendly's trademark phrases. He never talked down to his audience, never raised his voice. There was never any violence or inappropriate language. Just wonderful, educational entertainment, and I sat enraptured, well beyond the age of his intended fans.

I never met Bob Homme (a.k.a. The Friendly Giant) but I have spoken with a man who interviewed him extensively for his book, *Look Up – Way Up*, Grant D. Fairley. The book is subtitled 'The Biography of Robert Homme'. The front cover image is one of Friendly,

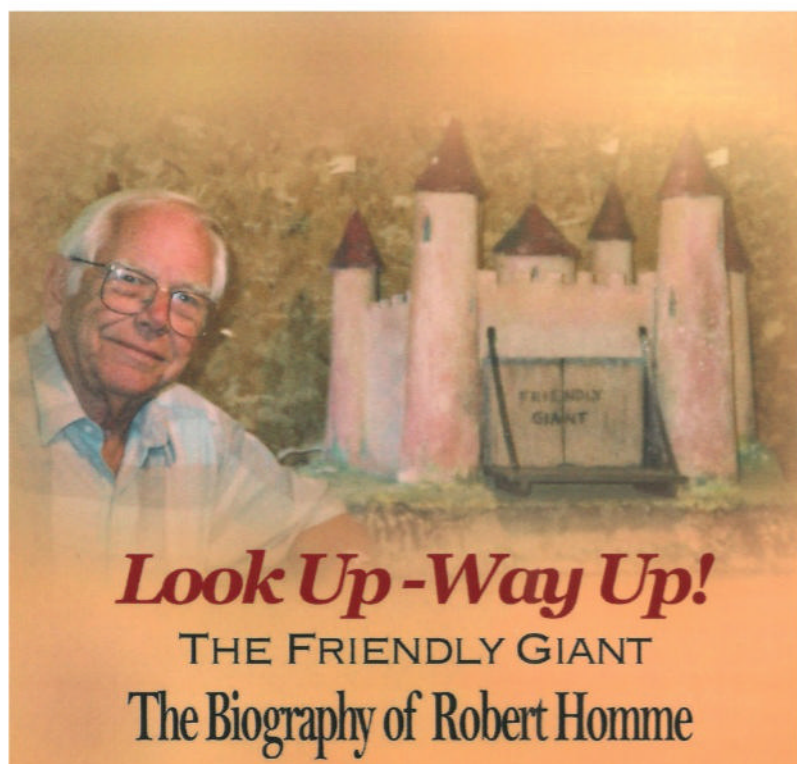
Jerome, and Rusty with several miniature musical instruments, the same picture Friendly would sign and send out to anyone who wrote to him. The back cover shows Mr. Homme in his later years in front of his castle. Grant told me Bob was the same in person as we saw on our televisions so many years ago. Mr. Homme had the same infectious excitement about his show nearly fifteen years after it went off the air. I'm so glad Grant shared his visit with me all these years later. I had bought and eagerly read Grant's wonderful book on Friendly Giant when it was first published in 2007, and looked him up online in an attempt to get photos for this feature. Grant was the perfect person to write about Friendly because I found him to share much of Friendly's character. The book makes a wonderful, nostalgic read.

So that's it. My catalyst into the world of miniatures. Friendly's been gone now for several years, but I was pleased to see that he's currently on Facebook and there are hundreds of images on Google as well as programme clips and whole shows on YouTube. Of course, I was only one of hundreds of thousands, likely millions, of Canadian children who had the privilege of Mr. Homme's unique and oh so memorable programme. His shows ran for some years in the United States too. I truly wish all children in all countries could have met 'my' Friendly Giant who shaped my future into the world of miniatures. 🏰

▼ Front cover of Grant's book featuring the picture Bob Homme sent to fans, available from Amazon (by permission)



▼ Back cover detail – Bob Homme as an older man with his castle (by permission)



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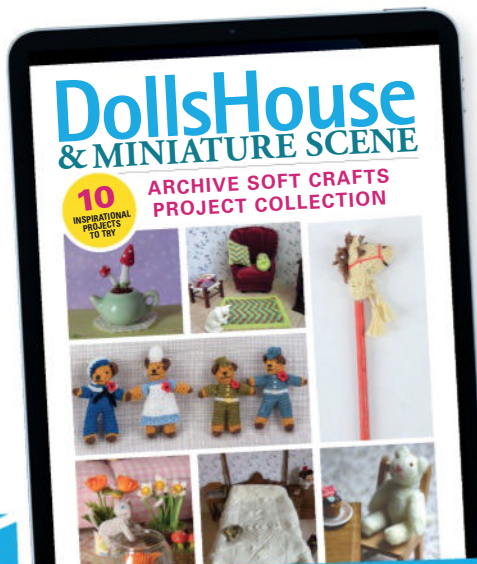
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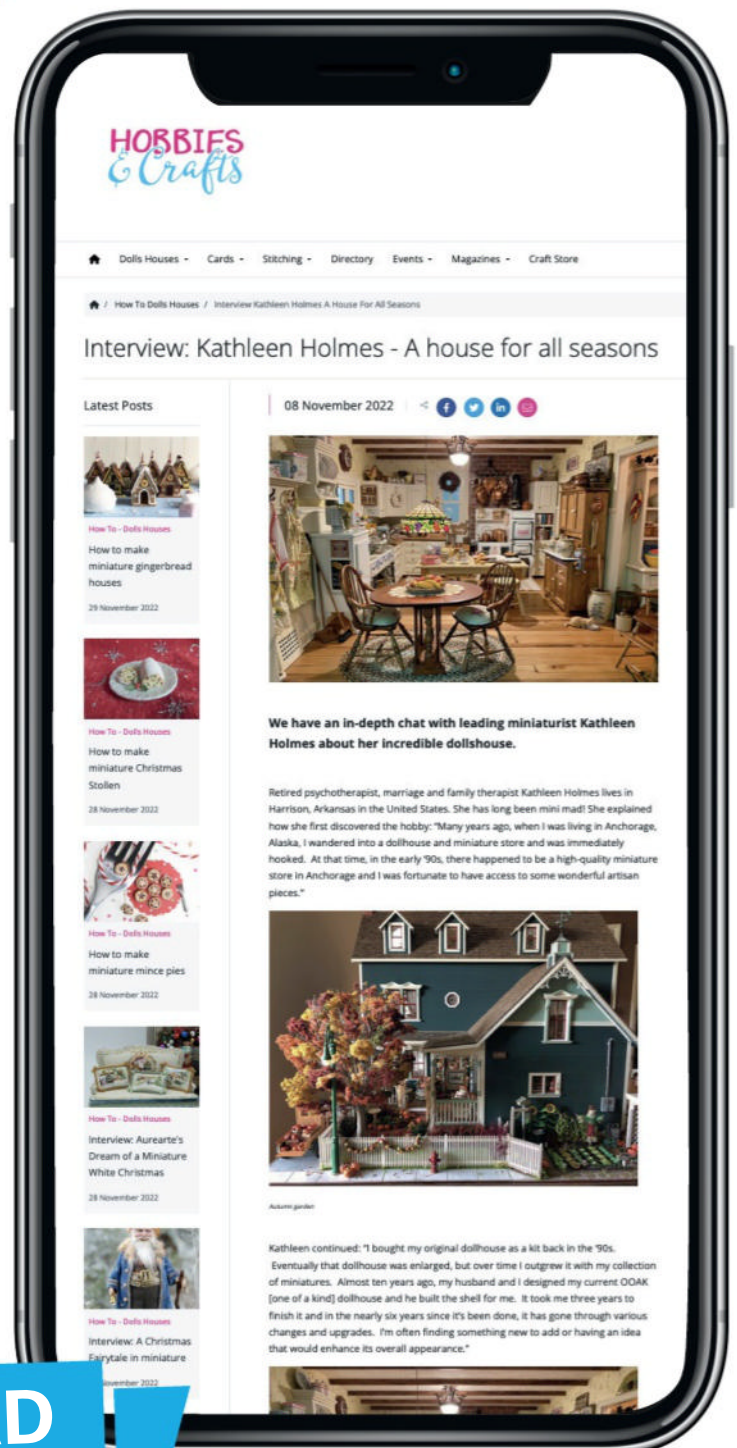
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Alexandra's mayhem and magic



Playing a harp is no problem with these many tentacles

Photos by Rob Tysall

If you're looking for the unusual, you're sure to find something weird, whacky and wonderful amongst Alexandra Blythe's Mayhem, Magic and Me miniatures.

From quirky octopus who are more likely to be tinkering with a motorcycle engine in their workshop than swimming in a tank, to bumbling dodos and leopards lounging on chaise longues. Should you happen to have a liking for bagpipes and tartan, then Alexandra has a knack for blending them together so there's no saying where furniture ends and bagpipes, octopus or chameleon might start! Then there's dragons and lions and penguins...

Musical instruments hit the high notes in her creations too with octopus playing a harp. In fact, her love of octopi is understandable, bearing in mind they have eight tentacles to be doing things with and are clearly capable of multi-tasking – just

“I try to make something for everyone, all the wild and whacky collectable miniature things you didn't realise you needed!”

▼ Camouflaged octopus

look at her octopus in the kitchen sink tackling the washing up!

Steampunk is another great inspiration for Alexandra. With her love of octopi being synonymous with steampunk for lots of reasons. Firstly, steampunk has been influenced by Jules Verne's sci-fi novel, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea where Captain Nemo battled several giant octopus on his adventures. Also, in the 19th century, the octopus was a symbol of the railroad and the Industrial Revolution which are central in steampunk culture. The sprawling networks of the railroads are similar to tentacles stretching out and taking over the farmers' lands.

Alexandra originally started making miniatures in 1990 and traded for many years as 'Four Seasons Miniatures'. She 'retired' in 2007 to try her hand at other art forms. She gained a degree in 



A splash of tartan



The inner workings



'Art and Wellbeing' and an MA in Fine Art during that time. After about 12 years the miniature bug started to itch again, and she started "fiddling about with tiny things". This led to her return to the miniature scene with Mayhem, Magic and Me featuring a completely new range of miniatures loosely based around the steampunk,

► Tippoo's Tiger



The original is life-sized and in the V & A Museum



magic and fantasy genres, but also including some old favourites.

She is still using polymer clay but also many other materials such as fine leatherwork, miniature basketwork, steampunk style mechanics and some fantasy buildings. Her characters like octopus and chameleon are fascinating – and sometimes camouflaged in their surroundings. “The children will often spot the camouflaged creature on the table or chair or merging with the tablecloth before the adult,” said Alexandra. “They are a lot of fun!”

She has also been working in wood. The first piece Alexandra ever carved was a 1/12th scale miniature of Tippoos Tiger – the original of which is on exhibition in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. It is one of the museum’s most famous and intriguing pieces.

‘Tippoos Tiger’ was commissioned for Tipu Sultan, ruler of Mysore in South India from 1782 to 1799. The tiger, an almost life-sized wooden semi-automaton, mauls a European

soldier lying on his back. Concealed inside the tiger’s body, behind a hinged flap, is an organ which can be operated by turning the handle next to it. This simultaneously makes the man’s arm lift up and down and produces noises intended to imitate his dying moans.

Wanting to try and reproduce this in miniature, at the start of Covid, Alexandra emailed the V & A for details of the model and was delighted to receive a PDF detailing all the workings, the description of the arm mechanisms, the bellows, the sounds and so on. She then worked between eight and 12 hours a day for eight weeks, attempting to re-create the model to scale, making everything from basic materials often having to repeat things time and again. “There was a great deal of hair tearing,” said Alexandra. “I saw it as a child would. I died it with tea bags and finished it with shellac.

“I tried to use original materials, getting all the mechanisms, bellows and lead

weights correct and working – using fishing weights and fine leather,” she explained. “It’s not real ivory in the model, it’s vegetarian ivory. The organ is made from pipe racks, but they turned out to be about a quarter of an inch too big, so they had to be made all over again. All the organ pipes are stuck inside the model, you can’t see them, and they never will be seen, but they had to be made correctly.”

Alexandra added, “I try to make something for everyone, all the wild and whacky collectable miniature things you didn’t realise you needed!”

If you can’t get to see Alexandra’s whacky and wonderful miniatures at the toy fairs where she exhibits, you can see more of her work on her Etsy page. 



INFO

See more of her work here:

<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/MayhemMagicAndMe>

Bar cart

This handy little cart is a neat addition to the dolls house dining room, conservatory, or patio. It transports drinks, snacks, dishes, flatware and more on its ample shelves and also has a built-in holder for up to three bottles. The fences around the sides ensure nothing topples off the shelves when the cart is in motion.

YOU WILL NEED

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- 1/16in (1.6mm) and 3/32in (2.4mm) thick sheetwood
- Four stair balusters
- Two 7/8in (22mm) symmetrical spindles
- Four legs
- Small wooden beads
- Two brass ball-head pins
- Brass sequin pins
- Brass crimp beads (two sizes – 1.3mm and 3mm used here)
- Four brass casters
- 1/16in (1.6mm) round brass tube (source: model railroad shop or ksmetals.com)
- Ultra-fine black Sharpie marker
- Wood stain marker
- Satin varnish
- White glue
- Superglue

TOOLS REQUIRED

- Knife and steel ruler
- Small saw and mitre-box
- Wire cutters
- Small hand drill – 1/32in (0.8mm) fit these sequin pins
- Needle files
- Needle-nose pliers
- Needle tool
- Corsage pin

Note: The balusters, legs and spindles are just suggestions. Any similar ones will work fine, or substitute small dowels. The cut off square ends from the balusters can be cut again and used for the caster holders too.

1 Mark the bottle holder and its three holes on the thinner sheetwood. Carefully cut the holes by cutting through the centre of each circle across the grain, nearly to the marked circle edges. Cut out a triangle on each side of the first cuts, again just approaching the marked circles. This makes a square hole in the middle of each marked circle. Cut addition small bits around each square to resemble three circles. Cut the bottle holder from the sheetwood along the marked edges. File the circle edges to refine each hole. **Tip:** I fit a wine bottle through each hole to make sure I wouldn't be surprised later.



Photos by Stephen Lesbirel

2 Cut the two full length shelves from this same sheetwood. Cut four straight fences and two curved fences from the thicker sheetwood. Cut the two spindles in half to support the bottle holder. Cut 3/8in (10mm) from the tapered and banded end of the four legs for the caster holders. Cut the square ends and tapered tips from the four balusters, leaving 1 1/2in (38mm) uprights for between the shelves.

3 Sand the two main shelves slightly rounded on the top edges and the back corners. Sand the straight and curved fences to soften the corners along the edges of the top faces. Sand the bottle holder smooth. Drill the two main shelves in the 13 positions on each shelf as shown in the template. Drill 1/16in (2mm) into all the fences for their pins where shown. Test this depth with the needle tool. Drill the centre top of the caster holders to later pin into the lower shelf and the centre bottom of those holders for the caster pins. Drill the centre top and bottom of each baluster for their pins.

Drilling tips: To drill the wood, lay the template pattern piece over the cut wood shape, pierce the paper with the needle tool to lightly indent the wood, and then use the drill. Drill slowly with light pressure,

especially along the grain line and near the end of the fences. Be sure each hole is big enough to accommodate a pin easily. Too much drilling pressure or forcing a pin into a hole can easily split the wood.

4 Stain all the wood pieces, including the wooden beads, if they are unfinished. Mark the shaft of a sequin pin with the Sharpie marker, 1/4in (6mm) beyond the head. Hold the pin head so its tip is in a rumpled paper towel on the work surface and snip the pin on the mark on its shaft. Repeat for all the fence holes drilled in the shelves (18 snipped pins in all). Be careful to discard the cut off tips safely in a bin. Varnish the tops of the shelves and the bottle holder, the beads and the baluster, spindle, and leg pieces. Sand the shelves lightly and varnish them again.

Ruth's Top Tips!

"My beads were already varnished but were unstained natural wood, so I slipped one at a time onto the needle tool, rested the back of the bead against my forefinger and sanded the varnish off, rotating the bead as needed, so I could stain it the colour I wanted."

Ruth's Top Tips!

"To hold the smallest pieces, so that they can be varnished, press a piece of double-sided tape onto a scrap board or piece of stiff card. Press the base of each piece to be varnished, onto this tape."

5 Slide the needle tool into each drilled hole to reopen any that may be closed with varnish. Superglue the head of a snipped sequin pin to the bottom of the lower shelf in the three fence locations along each side and at the rounded end. Stack a smaller crimp bead on a larger one on each pin tip, against the shelf, and superglue or glue the tips into the three fences. Glue the spindle pieces under the four corners of the bottle holder.



Ruth's Top Tips!

"Use the superglue sparingly, applying it with the tip of a corsage pin. Add white glue for extra strength when pinning wood pieces.."

6 Cut a 2 1/16in (52mm) length of brass tube. Mark the bending points with the Sharpie marker (it can be rubbed off later). Bend the tube with needle-nose pliers where it comes from the top shelf upwards and angles towards the back. Bend it again at right angles above that, to form one side of the handle as shown in the template. Slide the wooden beads onto the opposite end of the tube, which is still straight, and superglue them in place. Bend the other side of the handle to match the first side. Rub off the Sharpie marks. Set this handle aside.



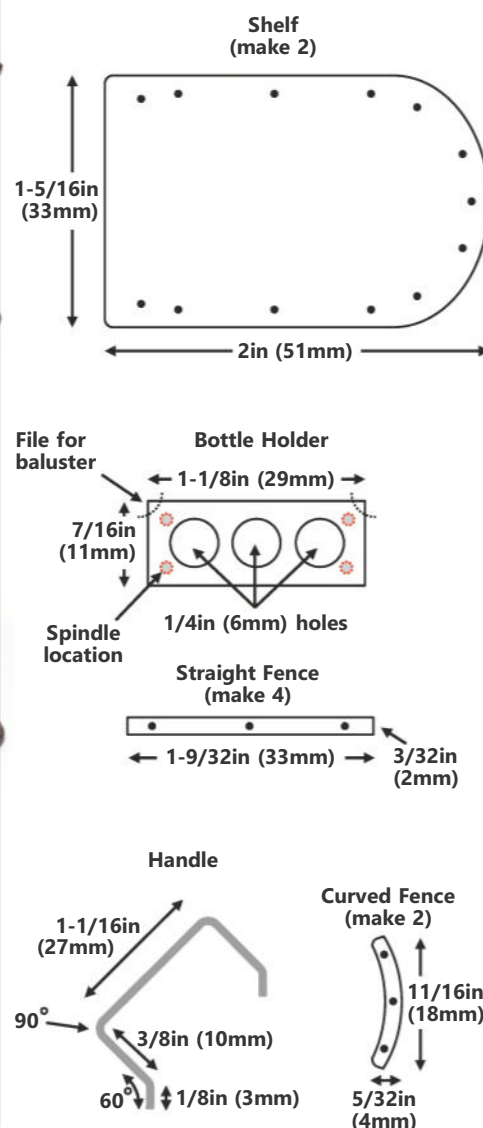
7 Attach the beads and fences to the upper shelf on sequin pins as for the lower shelf. Cut the heads from six sequin pins, leaving 5/16in (8mm) shafts. Discard the heads. Superglue four cut-off sequin pins into the tops of the caster holders, through the lower shelf and into the bottom of the baluster uprights. File the back corners of the bottle holder to better fit against the balusters. Touch up the stain. Superglue the bottle holder's spindles onto the shelf and the holder against the back balusters.

8 Superglue the back pins into the tops of the balusters, through the upper shelf, and into the handle. Cut two ball-head pins to have 5/16in (8mm) shafts. Superglue them through a smaller and larger crimp bead, through the upper shelf and into the front baluster top on each side. Superglue the wire tips of the casters into the bottom of the caster holders. 🏠

Bar Cart Template

Patterns at 100%

© Ruth Flewelling Lesbirel 2022



The Whole Kit & Caboodle:

18TH CENTURY VANITY SWING MIRROR

Moi Ali reflects on this Alison Davies mirror kit.



One of these days I plan to treat myself to a grand dolls house, full of antique-style pieces – especially those with a bit of a French, shabby chateau type of look. The go-to maker for such pieces is Alison Davies, whose French-inspired kits are well designed,



THE FACTS

Buy from:
Alison Davies
(www.alisondaviesminiatures.co.uk)

Cost: £17.50

Comes with: All components including self-adhesive 'mirror' and plastic tubing and thread to make realistic dripping candles

Additional materials needed:
Super glue, primer and paint

Specialist tools needed: None – although tweezers are useful for adding the wicks to the candles

Time: An hour including painting

Experience: Beginner

Top tip: Prime the assembled kit prior to painting and use a spray paint for a nice even finish that preserves the lovely carved detail on this mirror.

affordable and yet very beautiful indeed. I have built up quite a collection in anticipation of that grand miniature home! I've previously made up some of her beautiful tables and chairs, so this time I decided to go down a very different route with this gorgeous swing mirror kit complete with an

opening drawer and candles. It was oh-so-easy to put together – glue the bottom to the base, and the sconces and mirror to the frame, prime/paint, make the candles and job done! It was quick and easy, yet looks so very elegant. All I need now is a grand house to put it in! 🏠

EXCLUSIVE GIVEAWAY!

Would you like your very own Alison Davies swing mirror kit?

Sandra is kindly offering one lucky reader a kit to make for themselves.

To enter, simply visit www.dollshouseandminiaturescene.co.uk and click on giveaways!

Competition closes 31st January 2023. Good luck!

For more information regarding competitions visit www.warnersgroup.co.uk/competition-terms/

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