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WELCOME

to the April edition!

This issue we continue to 'spring clean' our mini makes with the new season in full bloom here in the UK, and with Easter around the corner we have some super projects to help add some seasonal flair to your scenes! Sadie Brown provides simple step by steps to make Italian bread complete with tiny eggs, the perfect treat to add to your mini kitchen table.

Elsewhere, there are more projects to get your teeth (and tweezers) stuck into. Join Ruth Flewelling Lesbirel for the second installment for building a tool shed – if you made the exterior in the previous issue, this month learn to make the roof and some internal storage solutions, then make sure you check out next issue where you can make some bunting to decorate!

We continue bringing you all the best advice from industry experts, including Bea Broadwood from Petite Properties and Ruth Flewelling Lesbirel's 'mini tips', plus Eleanor Catalina brings you the best hacks to help you along your miniature journey – lots of hints and tips that may blow your mind!

All this plus lots more inspirational interviews, projects and reader makes that are sure to make you say 'wow'!

Happy mini-making!

Joanne Garwell

Editor



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EASTER DELICACIES



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A twist on a seasonal treat

BEACH RESORT



P08

Inspired by the coast

ALL IN THE DETAILS



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Taking a look at windows and doors

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

Sadie Brown, Bea Broadwood, Moi Ali, Eleanor Catalina,
& Ruth Flewelling Lesbirel.



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MORE THAN A MAGAZINE...

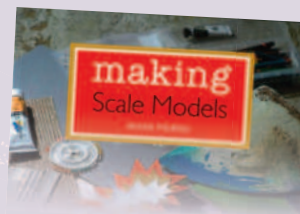


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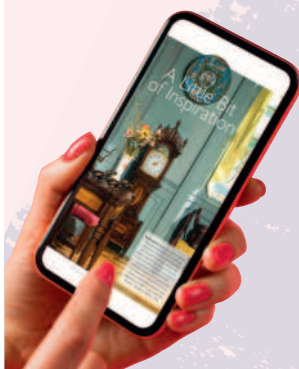


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08

HOW TO ENTER

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The closing date for all entries is

30th April 2023

Good luck!

Easter bread

Add a classic twist to your seasonal miniatures with these colourful Italian Easter breads.



YOU WILL NEED

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- White, pastel pink, fuchsia pink, dark blue, bright blue, green, lilac, yellow and red polymer clay
- Yellow, fuchsia pink, blue, green, white, golden ochre, dark cadmium orange and brown pastels
- Sculpey Bake & Bond (or similar)
- Gloss varnish

TOOLS REQUIRED

- Small paintbrushes
- Needle tool or sewing pin

Sadie's Top Tip!

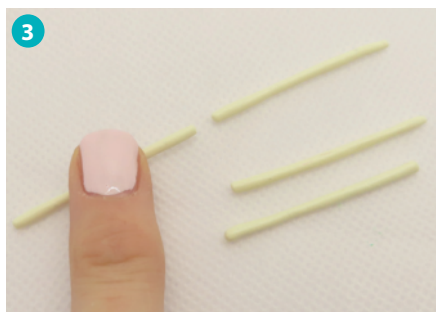
"Always condition polymer clay with your fingers before use for maximum flexibility and to prevent the clay from cracking."



1 Mix white polymer clay with bright yellow pastel to make a shade of cream resembling bread dough.



2 Roll the cream clay into individual balls measuring 6mm in diameter. You'll need two balls for each small Easter bread you want to make.



3 Roll each ball into a tube 2mm in diameter, ensuring they're of equal length.



4 Twist two tubes of clay together into a rope and curl into the shape of a wreath, tidying the join to create a seamless appearance. Repeat for each Easter bread.



5 To make the larger bread, take three balls of cream clay, each 1.1m in diameter and roll into tubes around 4mm in diameter and 6.6cm in length. Press one end of the tubes together, joining loosely at the top.



6 Plait the clay as tightly as possible and twist into a large wreath.



7 Mix grated golden ochre pastel with dark orange cadmium and brown. Test on a spare piece of cream clay to ensure you're happy with the colour and that it resembles the rich golden brown of freshly baked Easter bread before brushing liberally over all the bread.



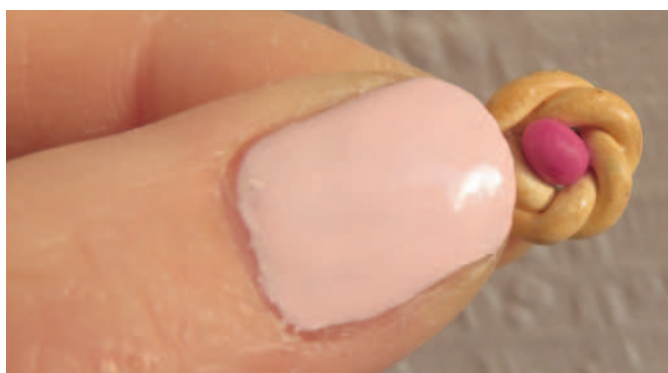
8 Roll a selection of tiny eggs from 4mm balls of polymer clay in pastel pink, fuchsia pink, bright blue, dark blue, green, yellow and red. You will need five eggs in different colours for the larger bread and one each for the smaller breads. Bake just the eggs and allow to cool.



9 Press five of the baked eggs into the 'dough' of the larger bread, sticking into place with Sculpey Bake & Bond or similar, adding one egg to the centre of each of its smaller counterparts. Bake all the bread and leave to cool before using a small, thin paintbrush to coat all the bread with gloss varnish, taking care to avoid the eggs. You might find you need two or three coats of varnish to achieve a good, glossy shine.



10 Whilst the final coat of gloss varnish is still wet and able to act as an adhesive, liberally grate pastel in white, fuchsia pink, blue, green and yellow over the top of several small breads to resemble sprinkles. Use a small damp paintbrush to brush away any flakes of pastel which land on the eggs.



A new dawn for the Getaway Chalet



Coastal living



Get away from it all at the Getaway Chalet

Enjoy the spring breeze and take a walk along the coast with Theresa Parker.

Miniature foundations

The world of small scale has been a part of Theresa Parker's life for as long as she can remember, a love of the ocean providing a backdrop for the coastal scenes inspired by the New Jersey shoreline. Vividly recalling fond childhood memories, Theresa remembers collecting acorns, fascinated by what she saw as their resemblance to a miniature pumpkin. But it is the dolls house built by her father when she was just seven which holds a special place in her heart. "My best friend's father also built her the same exact dolls house, and we spent almost every day after school playing with the dolls houses at one of our houses. We spent our allowance money at local dolls house shops and even attended some miniature shows."

Theresa also remembers ordering catalogues from various miniatures stores, a memory now lost to those pre internet days, the sense of anticipation building as we waited for the crisp pages to fall through the letterbox. "Although as a child I could barely afford everything I wanted, I just loved spending time turning every page and dreaming of creating an elaborate dolls house," she says. "When I was a teenager, I took a trip to Chicago, where I visited the Chicago Art Institute and discovered the Thorne Rooms. It was the most awe-inspiring exhibit and every time I visit Chicago, I head there. After college, I applied to a school for advertising and design. During the application process, they gave us all a plain white sheet of paper and told us to make something with it. Most people did drawings, but I folded and cut it and made a miniature 3-drawer chest with it." It wasn't only the tiny drawers which opened, it also unlocked doors for Theresa as the completed design led to her receiving an acceptance onto the course!

Today, rediscovering the world of miniatures after having her own children, that beautiful dolls house built by Theresa's father has been renovated to reflect contemporary style and the joys of coastal living, becoming the grand seaside retreat, Dominic's Quay. "His first name was Dominic, middle name Quay so I named it Dominic's Quay, quay being a term that means pier or dock," explains Theresa, who points out that the renovation continues to be a work in progress. "And there are things from my childhood that I have plans to incorporate into it. My dad loved his grandfather clock, and I happened to win one that looks just like it in an Instagram giveaway!"

Living by the sea, where palm trees thrive outdoors during the summer, Theresa has the ability to add genuine atmosphere, her coastal setting providing those beautiful backdrops for her work. None more so than The Dock House restaurant, built entirely from scratch and its outdoor seating area surrounded by stunning waterfront views. "I have a vision of creating a miniature coastal town, so a restaurant had to be a part of it. I wanted to create the type of casual seafood restaurant I would want to visit," she tells me, revealing that materials for a miniature build can come from the most surprising places and don't have to break the bank! "I had a few poster-sized Ikea picture frames that weren't being used. I cut them up, using parts of the frame for the base, the backing board for the walls, and the acrylic for the windows. I built it with the 





Relaxing by the waterfront



Dinner for two



Service please! The busy Dock House kitchen

intent of being able to easily bring it outside to my dock and photograph it outside, so I purposefully made it small enough to carry. I made sliding glass doors that would be the entry to the outside dining area. Around that time, the website miniatures.com sent me their pergola kit and asked me to finish it in my style. It fit perfectly sitting next to the doors, so I attached it and now there is a lovely outdoor dining patio!"

A talented artist whose ocean inspired 1/12th scale artwork can be seen hanging on the walls of several projects, The Dock House pergola isn't Theresa's only collaboration with miniatures.com. She has also recently finished work on their fabulous A-frame Getaway Chalet. "Once again, I made it so it would fit in with my beach town. I loved the size of it because I could carry it outside to take pictures of it," says Theresa, who should be rightly proud of the beautiful images of the completed chalet, taken on a



sandy beach, the pink sky and the crash of rolling waves behind it. Incorporating those real-life settings within Theresa's miniature photography has become her signature style. With twinkling lights in the distance, the night time view through the chalet's kitchen window is superb. The scene, which seamlessly blends our world with 1/12th scale, was surprisingly easy to achieve. "I have a window in my studio that looks out into my backyard. We live on a canal, and at night you can see lights on the docks of the surrounding houses. So, in the photo it's really just the real view out my real window, but I pushed the dolls house right up to the window, and the inside light is the ambient light in my studio."

Theresa states that she approached the design for the chalet's interior as if it were a real house, something which makes those small rooms even more intriguing. "I'm also a fan of real-life tiny houses so I treated



A shower of detail.
Dominic's Quay's luxury en-suite



this as if I was designing one for myself. I spent about a month staring at the empty house and creating different floor plans. I wanted it to have a kitchen that would be true to scale and functional, so I researched tiny house appliances and layouts." Theresa also made some 'structural' alterations to the kit, building walls to incorporate a bathroom. "I decided that the shower should be outside, partly because there wasn't room for it inside, and also because I feel every cute beach house needs an outdoor shower. So, there is a door from the bathroom to the deck, where there is an enclosed outdoor shower. I cut the roof and hinged it so you can lift it and see the whole shower. That is my favourite part of the build."

3D printing features throughout Theresa's realistic interiors, something she agrees has helped enormously in the rise of contemporary miniatures, bringing with it the ability to better recreate the modern world around us in small scale. "It definitely brought me back to the world of miniatures. It's interesting to me that there are people who are against 3D printing. It reminds me of how some people were against using computers early on in my design career. Although I love creating miniatures using more traditional techniques, I was frustrated that there were some things I felt I couldn't create without becoming a master in that medium, such as glassblowing and metalsmithing. The 3D printer helps with that." But as Theresa rightly points out, the huge amount of time and skill which goes into each individual miniature remains down to the artisan themselves. "They do not come off the printer ready to go. I feel like if you find a way to make miniatures that you enjoy, then do it! I happen to love 3D printing, painting and woodworking. I do not like sewing, but I will 'suffer through' if it means I get a cute miniature piece out of it!" Whether it's her matching jade style kitchenware, rattan effect baskets and trays, or even the illuminated snowmen available on her stand at last November's Philadelphia Miniatura, 3D printing has much to offer the modern miniaturist. However, it's important to remember that's only the beginning. It may be the ebb and flow of the tide which creates patterns on the beach, but it's our footsteps which make them more interesting! 🏠

Theresa with her childhood dolls house, Dominic's Quay



INFO

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Silk flowers

Spring has sprung with these glorious blooms!



Garden arbor

Cupid bird bath



Easter garden table



Come spring, provided the winter rainy season has been reliable, California bursts into colour. Its sunny and warm climate produces a profusion of flowers that range from English garden abundance to the herbs and fruits of the Mediterranean. One needn't wait until spring to enjoy beautiful blooms however. Pacific Silk Plants, located in San Juan Capistrano, is Orange County's premier choice for full size, extremely life-like silk flowers, orchids, succulents and trees.

The store's owner, Laura Crain, has an intense love affair with botanicals - living and faux. "For 42 years I have been a floral designer and since 1987 I have owned a silk flower shop. My hobbies have always

revolved around flowers; gardening, floral arrangements and painting. Making miniature florals, urns and garden vignettes combines my love of miniatures with my other interests."

Laura grew up in a large family where her more cerebral siblings went on to become doctors and engineers - Laura was creative down to her very core. Her favourite toy was her father's Lincoln logs, where she explored how many ways to create a log cabin. She graduated to a crude cardboard dolls house and created all kinds of miniature items out of anything she could get her hands on.

She learned about commercial dolls houses and miniatures from a childhood

friend who owned a fully furnished one. She also had a neighbor who, like an adopted Grandma, introduced Laura to the world of gardening, crafting and painting. Art was where she found her balance in life and for many years in public school, art, watercolours and bulb planting consumed her time. When she graduated from college with a degree in fine art, Laura's love of flowers blossomed into a full-time career as a silk flower designer, maker and shop owner.

While Laura was a teen, she became quite ill and missed an entire semester of school. At home, she experimented making miniature Boston ferns and roses out

Potting table



Wheelbarrow



Flower tub



Iron bench



Dressing table



of floral tape. The activity counted as a class in home schooling. "I learned how to make such realistic ferns and roses, a local miniature shop bought all the Boston ferns I could make and purchased dozens of my roses." From flowers she moved on to kit furniture, tiny slippers, tissue boxes and anything she could make with scissors, paint and glue. Little did she know these activities would enable her to become a renown miniature artist later in life.

As Laura's silk flower business bloomed, so did her skills as a miniature maker. It wasn't long before she was translating some of her full size flower arrangements into miniature. When she attended her first N.A.M.E. convention in Anaheim, Laura realized she was headed in a new direction as her miniature hobby became an extension of her career.

"Because I have a full-time business, I can only make miniatures in snatches of time, mainly on the weekend," Laura explains. "I love to start working early in the morning while I am still in my pajamas. When spring comes, I have such a hard time choosing between working on miniatures or being out in my garden, I struggle to pick which one to do on any given day. I love to make my flower beds look different every season. In the early spring, I have a yellow period when several varieties of yellow narcissus and freesias dominate the yard. In summer,



Cheese sideboard

my flowers are pink hydrangeas, roses and blue agapanthus. In winter I have pale pink camellias, fuchsia roses and white narcissus." Her favorites are often reflected in her miniature creations as well.

Having learned the rules of colour, balance and design in school, when it comes to miniature florals, scaling down her full size arrangements into miniature was a simple transition. But there is nothing simple when it comes to her elaborate arrangements. Whether you are decorating a dolls house representing centuries past or one of today's transitional homes, Laura's flower arrangements, filled with colour, textures and visual symmetry, work well in almost every room in the house.

On the other hand, her outdoors garden vignettes have a vintage, shabby chic appeal; a worn patina that reflects the timelessness of a garden. "A miniature piece should tell a story; its age and history," Laura points out. Her arbors, tables and fences groan under the weight of flowering vines and bushes, and her wooden structures receive several layers of washes or crackle finishes that appear to be decades old. Her ironwork peeks through a profusion of blooms and greenery.

Laura not only makes flowers and plants, but creates furniture and food vignettes, vanity trays filled with perfume bottles, cupboards and dressing tables. She even



Victorian trunk

"A miniature piece should tell a story; its age and history"

has a dolls house room filled with her own unique structures. "Ask my grown children, they will tell you I own at least 125, but that is a bit exaggerated," Laura laughs. "I have three very large dolls houses, seven houses that I made in Rik Pierce's classes and dozens of smaller houses and roomboxes. There's really too many to count! ▶▶▶

I just love my dolls house room! It was the reason I live in this house. It is a very large bonus room with a fireplace and three large built-in bookcases filled with room boxes of all sizes. I have three large windows which flood the room with natural light, and living in Southern California most days are bright and sunny. I have two extra-large work benches next to the windows where one of them set up just for miniature flowers and gardens. The other table is used for my many different building, painting and upholstery tasks. The next-door bedroom is storage for supplies. In the spring, summer and fall, I have a table in the garden that I use for building minis. I have to admit that my large dining room and kitchen table are covered with projects most of the year too."

Laura's favorite is whatever strikes her fancy at the moment, which is why she creates so many different types of miniatures. At times just sitting down at her admittedly messy work bench, she will scan her table and come up with an idea. Other times she will be out wandering in her garden or see a picture that will spark a vignette or arrangement. During the pandemic, when many shows and her own

▼ Summer bouquet



▲ Urn arrangement



floral shop were shut down, Laura began making hundreds of miniature cheeses. She had so many she began creating complimentary hutches, tables and cheese boards. Then she fashioned hundreds of crystal perfume bottles. Her list of inspirations is endless.

Laura does not take commissions, instead attending a few select shows a year like Tom Bishop's Chicago International, the Dallas Showcase of Miniatures and the Good Sam Showcase of Miniatures. Next year she hopes to attend the Kensington Dollshouse Festival.

"I sell hundreds of miniatures a year at shows and I bring far more items than I can sell. As a vendor, I like for customers to have a selection to choose from any time they come to my table. I love shows, seeing customers, discussing their projects and asking where their new treasures will be going. The following year, many will share photos of my creations in their wonderful scenes. Its so much fun being part of their mini worlds."

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This month I'm loving our new contributor Eleanor Catalina's Mini Hacks feature, she shares so many top tips that are sure to inspire you during your mini making. As a history lover, I loved reading Sadie Brown's The Fabric of Tudor life, it's a fascinating recollection of how Lilli Bass transforms historic costumes of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn into miniature! Lastly, April's must-make is part three of Moi Ali's Retro-Fit Realism series, windows and doors, which is certain to help change the way you approach your creations in the future!

IN THE NEXT EDITION...



Make sure you join us next issue to celebrate the coronation, by making this coronation chicken sandwich to add to your party scenes!



Complete your tool shed next issue with some outdoor décor, including the coronation emblem on some bunting!

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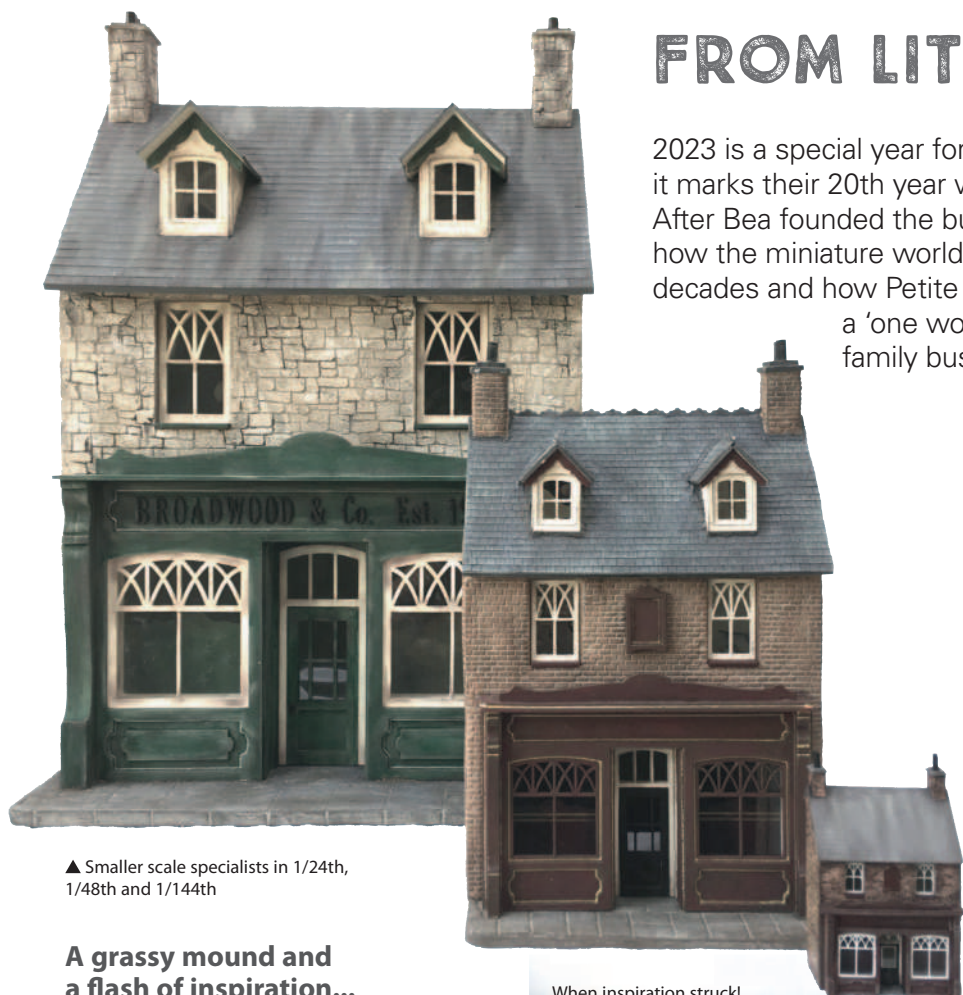


At Home with THE BROADWOODS



FROM LITTLE ACORNS...

2023 is a special year for the team at Petite Properties, as it marks their 20th year working in the world of miniatures. After Bea founded the business back in 2003, she explains how the miniature world has changed over the last two decades and how Petite Properties has evolved from a 'one woman army' into a flourishing family business.



▲ Smaller scale specialists in 1/24th, 1/48th and 1/144th

A grassy mound and a flash of inspiration...

Twenty years ago this month, I sat daydreaming on a grassy mound, lost in thought in my favourite place; Corfe Castle. I was thinking about a little dolls house that I had recently built. Not wanting to keep it, I listed it on a relatively new online auction site called eBay. To my complete surprise, bidding for the little 1/24th scale terraced dolls house I had made quickly took off and its final sale price was way beyond my wildest expectations. As I sat staring at the rolling Dorset hills, an idea began to form in my mind... What if I made another dolls house... and another? Could this be a new creative venture for me? During the long car journey home to Lincolnshire, I rolled the idea around in my head. What could I call my new venture? A business all about making tiny houses, it needed an appropriate name...

When inspiration struck!



'Petite Properties' I thought in a flash and the rest, as they say, is history!

Back from my Dorset holiday, work on my first batch of 1/24th dolls houses began on the kitchen table. As regular readers will already know, I am not a tidy worker and my poor family quickly got used to eating their meals surrounded by half built miniature houses and the fallout from my days spent enthusiastically 'making'. My little houses continued to sell on eBay and as those first months flew by, I quickly out grew the kitchen table and so I was hastily re-homed into the spare room.

In the beginning...

Keen to build on my initial eBay success, I took the plunge and booked a number of local(ish) dolls house shows. To be honest, I had mixed results. I still remember one small show that I attended. I took £1 and cried all the way home. Safe to say, Petite Properties was no overnight success! In the mid noughties, 1/24th scale was only really emerging into a 1/12th dominated hobby. Creating and marketing smaller scale dolls houses often felt like I was trying to swim against the tide. At one particular show I exhibited at, an established name in the dolls house industry wasted no time in confidently telling me that to base a miniature business in 1/24th scale was tantamount to business suicide. I have never forgotten their advice. Safe to say, I completely ignored it!

Over the years I pushed on, working exclusively in 1/24th scale and creating the kind of architecture in miniature that

I am passionate about in real life. During that period in my career I often felt like I was rolling a metaphoric snowball uphill; it was slow going, but it grew bigger and bigger as it collected more snow. In 2005 I attended Miniatura for the very first time. I had no expectation of how it would go, but I shouldn't have worried as I was blown away by the enthusiastic response my little houses received. It seemed that 1/24th had at last begun to make its presence felt and I ended the show with a huge smile on my face and an empty stand.

The long hard road to overnight success...

As the interest in 1/24th steadily grew, an even smaller scale start to emerge in the UK. I first learnt about 1/48th miniatures from a dear friend and instantly fell in love with the scale. It was small enough to be easily displayed, yet still large enough to incorporate surprisingly fine details. After getting to grips with the sizing and the maths, I designed my very first quarter scale dolls house... well actually it was a little shop. In early 2009 'The Corner Shop' was officially launched and my 1/48th adventure had begun. Unlike 1/24th scale, 1/48th seemed to explode in popularity and I followed up the success of my initial design with more and more dolls house kits. Business was booming and a house move and new larger workshop beckoned.

"Working with your wife is not everybody's cup of tea. Luckily our roles at PP differ significantly so we are not constantly treading on each other's toes. Bea is responsible for the design and development of new kits, whereas I look after production. So for us, working together works well. One rule we try to stick to is that we leave work at work and our latest move to our new HQ has allowed us to do just that." Tony.

▼ The Corner shop, Bea's very first quarter scale creation



Keeping it in the family...

Just as work was getting exiting, in 2009 life threw a curve ball and out of the blue my husband Tony was made redundant. Business wise, I was at a crossroads. Petite Properties had grown as big as I could achieve on my own. It needed investment and more hands to the pump if it were to continue to expand and grow. Tony's solution; he join the business and we buy a laser cutter. I wasn't sure. I love him dearly, but could we work together? In the end he made the decision for me and after 'popping out' he came home with a brand-new laser cutter in the back of the van! At the time it was a huge gamble and the years that followed were hard. We endured long hours, but our stubborn focus helped us to scale the huge learning curve that we faced. As the business workload grew, our youngest daughter Mo joined the PP team in 2013. She brought with her new skills, ideas, enthusiasm and a much needed additional pair of hands.



▲ Meet the PP Team; Mo, Bea & Tony

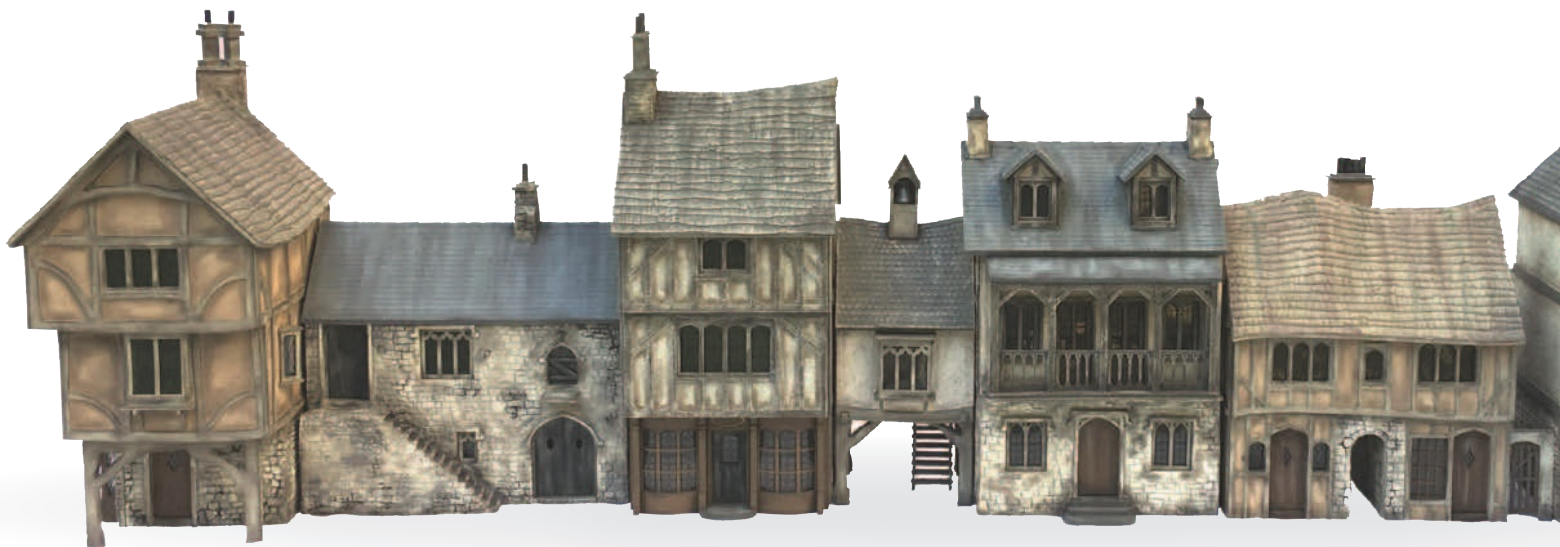
"I'm very lucky to be able to say that I love my job. Working with my parents can be challenging, but it is also a lot of fun. I've learnt a lot about the miniature world over the last ten years and I have seen it evolve and change. These days the focus of the hobby seems to have moved away from collecting to instead focus on making and DIY. I'm excited at all the plans we have for the future. I think I am going to be kept very busy!" Mo.

Tales of the unexpected...

As the years passed, quarter scale miniatures totally dominated our work life and 1/48th kits quickly made up the lion's share of our range. Whilst I still made a few 1/24th scale houses here and there, it was our 1/48th scale kits that flew off the PP stand. We watched on as our customers became hooked on quarter scale kits, collecting and building everything from humble cottages and country farms to fantasy towers and storybook dwellings. 

▼ The Old Boat House. One of Bea's 'one off' half scale dolls houses





▲ Cobblestone Snicket, a 1/48th street scene

Looking around at shows, we also started to see that quarter scale miniatures were popping up on more and more stands and globally, interest in our 1/48th scale kits just kept on growing. At this point we quickly outgrew our garden workshop and office and for the sixth time in 20 years we were on the move again. But just as we started to look for larger premises, the whole world turned upside down and in 2020 Covid hit.

Overnight, we went from a team of three to just two as (Minion) Mo was forced to shield at home and with people around the world suddenly confined in lockdown,

online orders went through the roof. During those long months, Tony and I battled away to fulfil the avalanche of orders. Development of new kits completely halted and the commute up and down the garden path became the highlight of our day. But despite it all we were truly thankful to be working and to be so busy. It was a good problem to have, during a very dark time.

Over the last 20 years technology has evolved and social media has become more and more dominant in our lives. The World Wide Web has brought miniaturists around the world together and this was never more

▼ Tufty Burrows was PP's second 'fusion' kit



▲ La Maison De Ville in quarter scale

The Old Methodist Church, PP's forever home



evident than during the pandemic. Dolls house club members met over Zoom, rather than in person and online shopping became an absolute must. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram connected miniaturists and allowed them to stay inspired by, and in touch with the miniature world; despite physical isolation. Ever thankful for our established online shop, we sent our smaller scale kits to over 25 countries all around the world.

Lockdown was not only busy for us at work, but we also used the time to secure new premises for our growing business. After months of delays, in May 2021 we finally completed the purchase of our new HQ and the keys to The Old Methodist Church were at last ours! A few months later we made our sixth and (hopefully) final move into PP's new home. We admit that it is a little bit of an unusual building, but the space and light make working there a dream and the calm and tranquil atmosphere means that it is a truly special place in which to design and create.

The future's bright!

Looking back, a lot has changed over the last 20 years. The dolls house glory days of the 80's and 90's are long gone. It is also clearly evident that the miniature world has got that little bit smaller, with many talented artisans retiring from the hobby. However, it is not all doom and gloom. The isolation of the pandemic highlighted for many the importance of our hobbies. New areas of the dolls house world such as fantasy, shabby chic and modern miniatures have come to the fore and the smaller scales have continued to rapidly grow in popularity. There are new artisans emerging, bringing with them new skills and modern technology. As a family business, we are overflowing with new ideas, new projects and new paths that we plan to explore. The last 20 years have been an amazing adventure. Sat on that grassy mound I could never have imagined what the future had in store. So, as I look forward to the next 20 years, armed with a sketchbook stuffed with new ideas; I wonder just what adventures the coming years will hold? *Bea.* 🏠

If you would like to read more about PP's unusual new HQ, why not check out Bea's 'At Home With The Broadwoods' feature in issue 326/July 2021 of DHMS Magazine.



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JULIE GILL @MINIATURE_FRENCH_CHATEAU

Readers may recognise this month's Insta Queen, says Moi Ali.

You may feel that you already know this month's showcased maker, Julie Gill, if like me you were an avid viewer of The Great Big Tiny Design Challenge on Channel 4 last year.

Given her beautiful creations, it's hard to believe that Julie was the first to have to leave the TV competition – but someone had to be first, and Julie had been given the particularly challenging task of creating Regency dining chairs under severe time pressure.

But let's take a step back to how it all came about. Julie, 55, lives in a village in Lancashire, where she owns the local chippie. She originally trained as a beauty therapist, and lived the dream in California, where she then trained as a nail technician. She returned home in 1991, and the budding entrepreneur opened her first sculptured nail salon, one of the first in the UK, in the neighbouring market town of Clitheroe. She moved on to body piercing and also trained as a tattooist. These all seem a million miles from her life today as a leading miniaturist!



Julie continued: "I then married, and had three children: Chloe, Olivia and Lewis, so I decided to sell my businesses to spend more time with them." Yes, Julie, but tell me about the dolls houses!

"I had two Lundy dolls houses as a child, but sadly the mice took up residence in them when they were 'safely' stored in our barn, or so we thought! So the houses could not be played with by our daughters. By chance, a dolls house fair was on in a neighbouring village, where I bought a pretty dolls house for the girls. I painted and decorated it, and filled it with furniture. It was so much fun that I then bought a dolls house shop roombox, so I could replicate my beauty salon."

Now I start to see how Julie's life story begins to weave seamlessly together, with miniatures a thread that runs through. She continued: "I decided the shop needed a room above, as my own shop was two-storey and I wanted an exact replica – or as near to it as I could. I measured-up and got some wood cut, then with determination and patience I made it, much to my daughters' delight. We then had fun making curtains and contents such as a beauty couch!" 



“I seem to have a passion for building French inspired shops!”





Years later, Julie spotted in a shop window what she describes as “the most beautiful French-style dolls house, which was a window prop. I decided that I too would love a showstopping statement piece of art in my home. I searched online for months to no avail, until I spied a Greenleaf Beacon Hill kit for sale only a few hours away. Off I went, with great excitement, to pick it up. I literally started building it within moments of arriving home!”

Julie’s enthusiasm was short-lived, as it was a really difficult build. Nothing fitted together as it should, she had splinters in her fingers from sanding the thin plywood, and the whole experience very nearly put her off miniatures! “I very nearly used it for firewood,” confided Julie, “but thankfully I joined Facebook groups to gain advice on the build, and I posted progress pictures. The members were really encouraging, and my dolls house then got the nickname Chateau Prosecco, as it literally drove me to drink!”

She continued: “I didn’t understand fully the pages and pages of instructions, so I



omitted half of the kit! Little did I know that I was 'kit bashing'! I soon discovered, thanks to much encouragement from friends, followers and family, that I had found another hobby that I loved. So I bought another dolls house kit, and Chateau Champagne was built, followed by Chateau Verve Clicquot, my very own scratch built model."

It was adventurous of Julie to attempt such a large scratch-built model, but she threw herself into the project with her usual enthusiasm. She explained the process: "I drew on cardboard where I wanted the doors and windows, then I made some careful calculations before getting my wood cut. I am very lucky to have an amazing timber yard and joiners shop nearby. They are very patient, and love to help me... I think! My trusted tools are my jigsaw for cutting out window openings, and my scroll saw for cutting intricate shapes for furniture, rocking horses and so on. I seem to have a passion for building French inspired shops. I've built several now, in a signature colour palette of creams, blues and greens – always adorned with lots of flowers!" 🌸▶





So, Julie, tell us about the telly! "Well, I was approached via my Instagram account, by Yeti Television, who asked whether I would be a contestant on a new dolls house show, The Great Big Tiny Design Challenge. Obviously I just laughed it off, thinking it was a prank. Then one of my customers sent me a link to the programme and suggested that I apply to be a contestant! I messaged the TV company the day after saying 'yes please!' Within hours, I was in meetings with the producers."

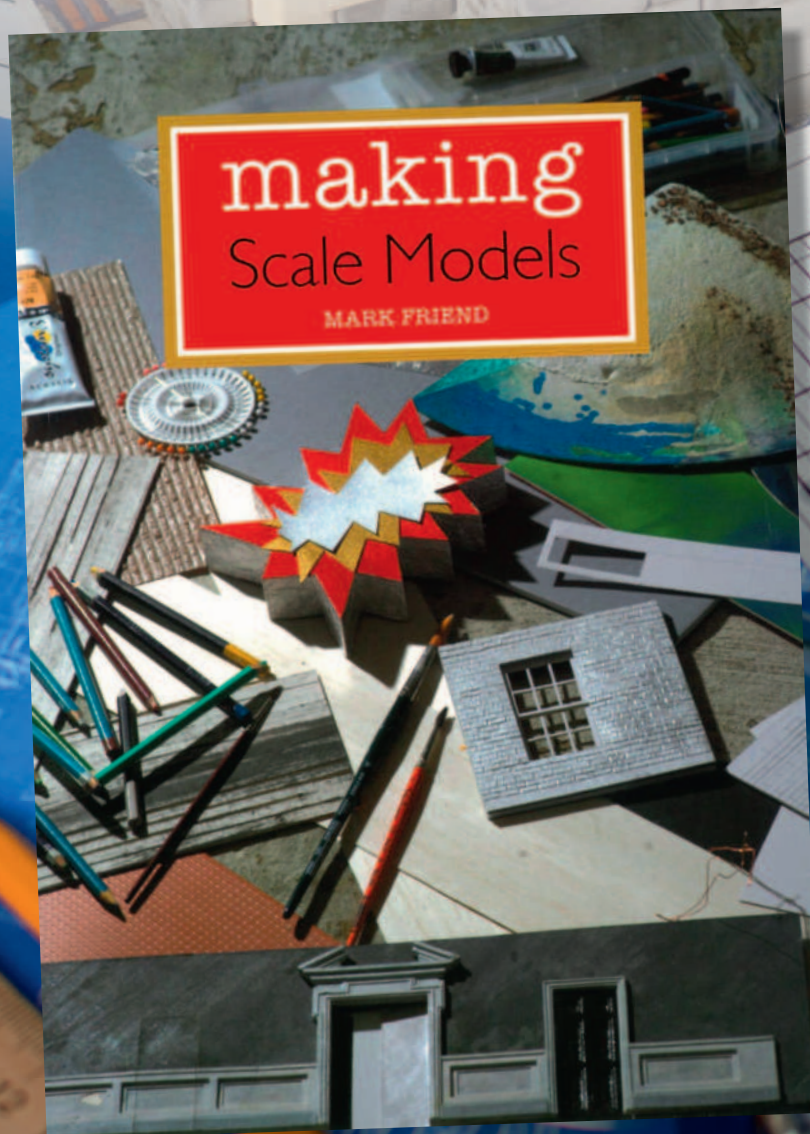
Julie absolutely loved being part of the show: "I had so much fun, even though I had a lot of pressure put on me. Not only did I have to hand-make four matching chairs, I also had to do a full hand-crafted parquet floor, and add gold highlights to the fireplace! This involved getting down on my knees and stretching in with a camera behind me, at the side of me, and in front of me! I got a fit of the giggles – not so helpful when wielding a fine brush and gold paint, as I'm sure you can imagine. It was very difficult to produce the quality of what I do at home in the time available, but would I do it again? Yes, absolutely! In fact, I was invited back for the Christmas special! It was a privilege to take part, I had such a great time with incredibly talented fellow miniaturists and I made friends for life. What's not to like?" 🏠



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Get lost in a rabbit warren of detail with Natasha's creations



Hoppy Easter

Hop into the world of Natasha Semenchenko this Easter.

'And who are you looking at?'



A gift from the Easter bunny?



So sweet!

A time of change

When Natasha Semenchenko first discovered the world of miniature art, intrigued by the ability to recreate the world around us in small scale, she could never have imagined how her life would change just a few short years later. As she left behind her home and family in Ukraine last spring, it was the power of imagination and a love of the arts which allowed her to continue sharing joy through images of her tiny, crocheted animals. Having spent time in Germany and Poland, I asked Natasha how she had found the process of continuing to create art during a difficult period; "Creativity heals the soul, saves you from bad thoughts, allows you to find new friends, admirers and like-minded people," she tells me. "Creativity is a breath of fresh air. If not for the creativity, I cannot imagine how we can endure all those events that have brought fear and great sorrow in my country. Creativity gives strength to endure everything and move on, no matter what. Thanks to creativity, I met so many kind, interesting, creative, sympathetic, and simply amazing people on my way."

It is this human connection with creativity which visual storyteller, Natasha, cites as having brought the greatest sense of achievement in her career to date, explaining the importance of ensuring each character evokes an emotional response in those who view her work. Natasha's portfolio is varied, including rabbits, leopard cubs, parrots and even baby hyenas, [see more](#)

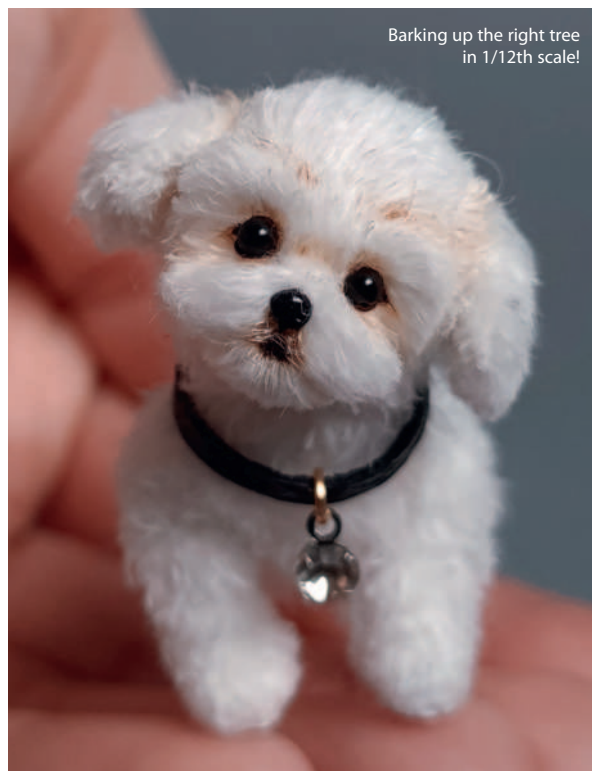
An inquisitive puppy



The range of motion in Natasha's creations is staggering



Barking up the right tree in 1/12th scale!





Put your best paw forward!

but there's no doubt it is her puppies which have captivated both Natasha and her large fanbase on social media, an audience understandably fascinated by the posable nature of each animal. The way a puppy turns its head inquisitively towards the camera or stands on three paws to reveal the exceptionally detailed pads on the fourth; it is these details which enthrall an audience captivated by a mesmerising level of mobility. Depending on the breed, some puppies are also able to move their ears, and Natasha is quick to point out that her rabbits are equally action friendly. "My rabbits without skeleton, are about 1.5-2cm tall, but all parts of the body are movable thanks to the 5-point attachment of the paws and head. This process takes some time, but the main result, a little creature that can move his paws, tail and looks into your eyes with love." You may even find that one or two of Natasha's rabbits will even look into your eyes with steely determination as they insist you're not going to get your hands on the freshly picked carrot or beetroot she has lovingly hand crocheted for them!

Spinning a yarn

Exploring the creative process further, Natasha uses crochet hooks ranging between #1 and #0.35 in her work along with what she perfectly describes as 'fine, fluffy yarn', something which clearly takes time and

effort to source. "I search for the right yarn worldwide, in all the countries and all the stores where I can find it. Then through experimentation I choose and use the most suitable yarn for the toy." But as Natasha continues to make a name for exceptional realism, what does she feel is key to attaining those true to life features her work is quickly becoming renowned for? "To make the miniature animals look realistic, I use a yarn that is very similar to wool," she explains. "It is also very important to study a real living creature, a prototype toy, photos of a live rabbit, a puppy, and recreate in detail this living creature in miniature. I just love this part of the process, to paint 'life' on the yarn, to breathe with the colours of the soul in a small toy." Natasha describes this as her favourite part of the process, which is no bad thing as it's also one of the most time consuming. "Painting can take all day and those hours will just pass unnoticed," she smiles.

The facial features are especially important, each little nose sculpted using polymer clay. It is through the eyes which help to form the personality of each individual character. For these, Natasha uses either Czech beads, black beads or German glass eyes. "I choose what to make the eyes from depending on what kind of look I want to get as a result of the toy. The most important thing for me is to create a toy with a 'live' look. My faithful helpers are super thin paintbrushes, which I buy at the store

for nail artists." If you look closely at Natasha's rabbits, you will notice tiny claws just visible on poseable paws. Those finely detailed puppy paws are of equal fascination and Natasha is happy to let us in on the secret behind the illusion. "I use a special paint for fabric, which hardens in the air and this paint can be added layer by layer, thus creating volume, volumetric pads. This process is best done with a needle."

Forever home

Natasha's creations are quickly adopted into their new families, arriving beautifully packaged inside wooden boxes crafted in Ukraine and etched with both her Tutsiminiworld logo and a small puppy reflecting her unique designs. Still only three years into her creative journey, which now runs parallel with the uncertainties of another, hopefully leading Natasha home to Ukraine one day soon, it is astonishing to see what she has accomplished. Her skills have continued to flourish during what has no doubt been an extremely difficult period, and when she packed her bags in the spring of 2022, she made sure to tuck one very important thing in her suitcase. Hope. "I would like to ask readers to never stop dreaming," she says. "And play with toys. It heals the soul and brings us back to that happy moment - our childhood. Because age is just a number on your passport, please never stop dreaming and loving." 🏠

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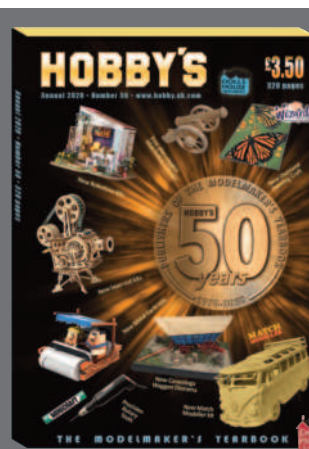


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RETRO-FIT REALISM:

DOORS AND WINDOWS



In part three of this mini-series, Moi Ali showcases techniques for realistic doors and windows.

A door ajar, as in this scene by Andrea Thieck, looks fab



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Ready-made windows in all sizes and styles

It is said that the eyes are the window of the soul, and in my view, windows give soul to a house – whether full-size or miniature. The wrong windows jar! UPVC plastic windows on an historic Georgian house look plain wrong, whereas a traditional window on an ultra-modern home can be just as offensive to the eye.

Getting doors and windows right is a good way to ensure realism at miniature scale. Starting with doors, let's think door furniture. Door handles, locks, hinges, letter boxes, door bells, house numbers, door knockers, bolts, latches, key holes and escutcheons (key hole covers), fingerplates,

Moi says

"Use a smidgeon of dark brown shoe polish on doors around the handle area to simulate years of grime."



Door handles and keys make a door look more real

door grilles, peep holes, hooks and hangers... perhaps even a door self-closer for a commercial premises.

All can be found on full-size doors and so all should be replicated on a miniature door for maximum effect. Even cat flaps can be obtained in small scales, so there's no excuse for not reproducing every element. What door furniture and style fits your dolls house's era? A traditional lionhead door knocker in brass or iron? An electric doorbell, or intercom – or perhaps even CCTV! Companies such as Delph Miniatures make lots of modern-day accessories such as modern door bells and bell boxes. They also do a door chain in brass for indoor security! How about a 'no junk mail' sign on the front door, or a Neighbourhood Watch notice?

Don't forget wear and tear on your door if it's to look really lifelike! Scuffs where a door has been kicked closed over the years, and grubby marks around door handles from mucky mitts are essential details!

Door (and window) colour is important too. Think about what colour would have been used for the era of your house. Heritage pastel shades were favoured by the Georgians, subdued drab colours by the Victorians – but if you have a Victorian home set in the modern era, you can go wild if you wish! Don't automatically choose white window frames. Is there a better alternative? Black was popular for window frames at the end of the 19th century, and green in the 1940s. Anthracite is a good colour for a 21st century home.

Don't forget the doorstep too! How about a pint of milk? Andrea Thieck sells a range of traditional milk bottles, with or without milk – empties, or freshly delivered! Or perhaps a bottle with a small bird pecking at the top, like the ones made by Laura Brownlow of Country Treasures? Or an empty bottle and a note for the milkman requesting a pint of silver top – Laura makes these too!



Adding window embellishments



Moi retro fitted this Juliet balcony

Or a newspaper or letter sticking out of the letter box? These are easily found online and printed off for immediate use. Or a cat waiting to come inside? Or a parcel dumped by an Amazon delivery driver! These small details matter. They bring humour as well as realism to a scene. Attention to the humble doorstep can make a big difference.

Why not embellish your door and window surrounds? I am planning to add laser cut decorative pediments to the windows on one of my dolls houses. They cost just a couple of pounds, but can transform a façade when painted up to match and glued in place. Add a window box or two while you're at it! For a grander look, try a Georgian pediment, columns, pilasters... or perhaps topiary trees in urns either side of the door, or even just a few potted plants on the step.

I added a small Juliet balcony to the one of my properties, which I made using metal railing, a small piece of wood and a couple of corbels. You can achieve the same effect with plastic railing, or you can buy ready-made balconies.

A balustrade is another option. Quite a few dolls houses come with flat, 2D versions, and if possible, replacing them with proper rounded balusters will add realism to your little property. I spoke to miniaturist Hazel Wyle, who replaced the ones on her grand dolls house to great effect. She has been having fun fearlessly ripping out features throughout and retro-fitting panelling and other features that add realism inside and out. Follow her example and have a go! ➡

▼ Flat 2D balustrades on Hazel Wyle's house



Milk bottles by Country Treasures are perfect for a doorstep



▲ Use paperclay to make mullioned windows

A more radical addition would be a porch around the door, and kits are available in various styles, or have a go at making your own using commercial components such as posts and rails. More radical still, how about a veranda? It could transform your entrance area.

You can. Of course, change your doors and windows if you wish, and ready-made versions are available – or you can make your own if you have the skill. I learned a technique from miniaturist Sue Simpson of using mount board and paper clay to make super realistic stone effect gothic mullioned window and arched doorway. It was easy and cheap but oh so effective!

▼ Frame windows with curtains for a soft finish



▲ Curtains made using the glue method

Inside your house, pay attention to your windows by added curtains and blinds. A quick and cheap way to create curtains is to reuse fabric from an old cotton summer dress or blouse (plain or ditsy prints work well, but avoid out-of-scale patterns). Cut two pieces of fabric, each the same size as the window (including any window surround), plus a small seam allowance all the way round and a little extra to the length. Hem the bottom and sides, then doing a running stitch along the top, and gather to size. Repeat for the other curtain. The curtains will flare out at the bottom and will not hang at all well. Simply wet them in a saucer of watery PVA glue (1:4 glue to water). When thoroughly soaked, form natural folds and pin in place on a cork mat while the curtains dry. You can then simply glue each curtain either side of the window.



► Moi's church window uses the acetate method

Although they are a little stiff to the touch, they don't look stiff and they hang beautifully. Do not use this technique on fabrics that will not take water well, such as silks and velvets.

Few dolls houses have internal window sills. Adding them using stripwood held in place by little supports is a great way to add a realistic touch. You can then display ornaments, a pot plant or a photo frame.

Stained glass is another really lovely touch, to bring colour and life to a tiny house. Whether it's a gothic church, Art Deco apartment or Edwardian house, stained glass adds a touch of class to your glass. Create convincing designs using printed acetate, or try your hand with lead in a tube and glass paints.

Talking of lead in a tube, create leaded 'lights' this way, or using self-adhesive lead strip. The latter is made for full size windows, but the strip on a roll can be cut into thinner strips with a careful hand and a sharp scalpel. Whichever method you use, draw or print a template and lay it beneath the acetate as a guide.

Moi says

"A lintel above a door or window can add realism. Just use stripwood, suitably distressed, for a country cottage. Stone and brick lintels are common too, and brick lintels often incorporate a keystone. These can be bought from makers such as Sue Cook."

DIY stained glass

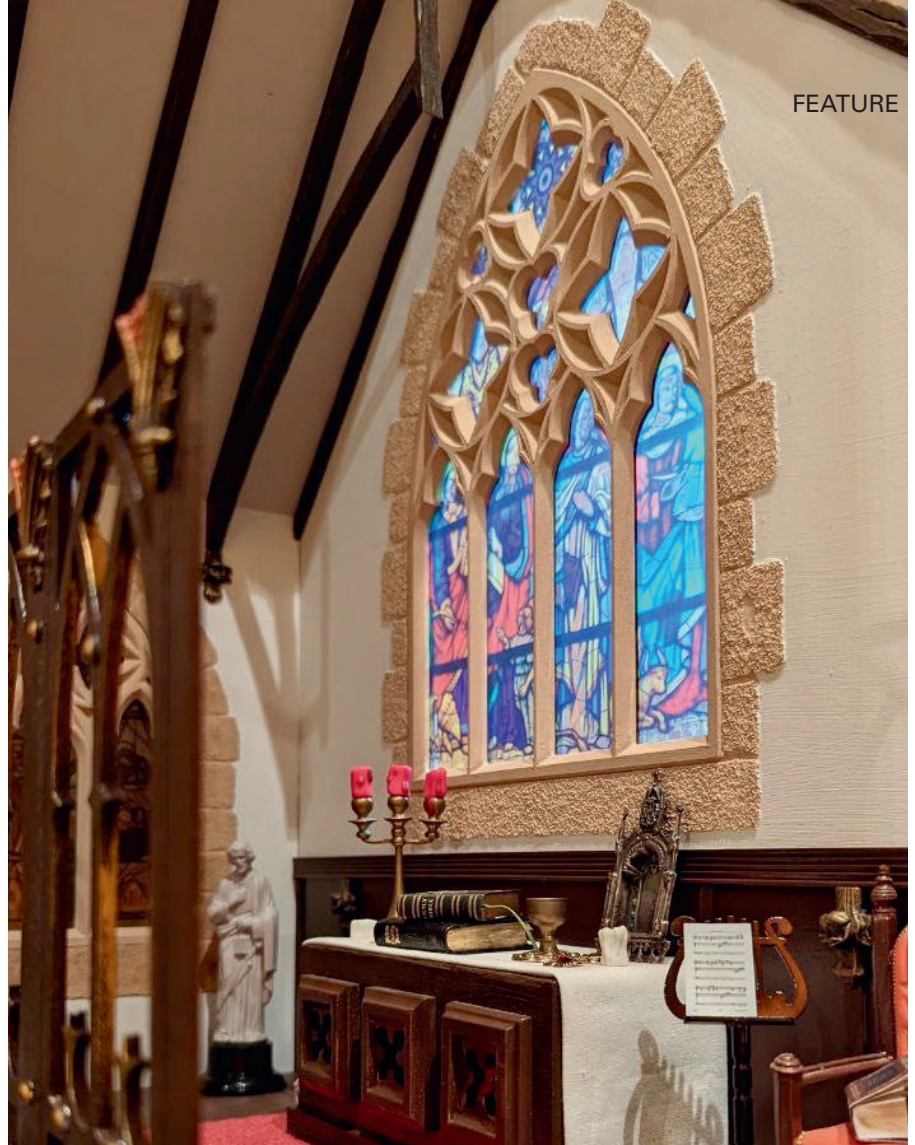
It's easy to achieve convincing 'stained glass' in doors and windows.

Find a stained image you like online that is suitable, resize it on your computer, and print it onto acetate. (I get mine laser-printed at a print shop to ensure it is great quality and colour-fast. You can fit loads of images onto an A4 sheet so it's great value.)

Cut the image, then 'tack' it to the 'glass' on your dolls house by dotting glue around the edges where it will not be seen. I have used this quick and easy technique to good effect in a number of my miniatures, including my church, beach café and Mountfield dolls house. 🏠

NEXT MONTH

Moi looks at internal walls, ceilings and floors.



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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 details how she revamped her first dolls house...

Photos by Stephen Lesbirel

The great dolls house revamp

People often want to see my first and main dolls house and right now I'm a little ashamed of it! It's in need of some TLC and I plan to give it just that. Maybe you picked up a formerly loved dolls house at a jumble sale, inherited one from your great-aunt, or just rediscovered the one you stored away in the attic from years ago. Like any home, dolls houses need periodic maintenance and repairs, even if they haven't been in storage for a while.

First, a little background: My Dad built this dolls house for me from a kit for Christmas in 1993. It closely resembles the home we built for ourselves a few years before and where we still live today. Much like our own experience when we first moved in, the outside was completely finished but the inside was completely unfinished. He and my Mom even decorated the exterior, with Santa on the chimney top, green yarn with a festive silver thread wound around the four front pillars and green felt on the decking in front of the house. I should mention that the pair of oversized black crows on the roof, which remain there today, were my Dad poking fun at me. We had moved from the city to a suburban wooded lot with seemingly immense crows or ravens that really enjoyed sharpening their bills on our new asphalt shingled roof! As this area developed over the years, the crows share their time now amongst our neighbours, so they aren't quite as annoying.

The dolls house was new in 1993, but that is an amazing 30 years ago now! Even though it has since been kept on a purpose-built cabinet in my sewing room and has had



no damage over the years, even when we glided it out of the room to redo the floor, the only additions since were a new front gable window, a lovely brass weathervane, and any number of furniture and accessory additions that I had made or purchased over the years. It really needed a good critical assessment with fresh eyes to see the faults and hopefully bring it back to its former glory.

My approach...

First of all, it still has lots of merits and highlights in spite of me becoming side-tracked on other ventures over the years. So, I needed to take stock, as it were, of the areas that needed work. And I needed to decide how I would approach what had to be done. There were some very obvious issues that I needed to address and then some 'nice to do' items, again much like a real house. It turned out that my dolls house needed a number of quite small and easy fixes that would really have a big impact.

My most obvious problems were in the top floor of the house. As in the two floors below, I had wallpapered stiff card for each wall and then snug-fit and held them in place with a sticky putty. I had wanted to have the flexibility to change the wallpaper and most importantly to get to the wiring if it failed, with easily removable panels. This seemed to work fine in the two floors below but became problematic on the slants of the top floor. I was expecting these panels to stay in place, defying gravity, with very little support. Inevitably, they sagged and I risked them falling completely, possibly breaking some of the miniatures below them. The obvious answer was to glue these panels in permanently, burying any electrical tape wire, potentially making it difficult to fix in future. I opted for this solution though, because in

theory at least, nothing SHOULD happen to the electrical tape run, protected by a ceiling and on the top floor, where I had wisely minimized the wiring in these slants. I still had access to the tape further back from any fixtures, where it ran over the base moulding, so I will be able to re-pin a new run to a ceiling fixture if I ever need to do that.

Another easy to fix problem was the floor covering itself in the top floor. I had just laid the wood flooring sheets in the rooms, cutting around the obstacles, and at that time it had lain flat. This seemed prudent at first, since I had several electrical tape runs hidden under the floor and they would be easily accessible if I could just lift out the flooring.

▼ BEFORE - Sagging ceilings



▲ AFTER - Tight and straight ceilings



Over time though the flooring absorbed moisture in summer and gave it up in winter, meaning that it was now somewhat curled. The biggest part of this job was to empty all the rooms on that high level, affix the floor, and refurnish. I first took a couple of photos to guide me in the replacement of furniture and took this opportunity for a good 'housecleaning', both of dust and also reallocating and repositioning the contents. There were also those inevitable fixes and additions to be made, for example, I found the frame had come loose from a mirror and fallen to the floor. It just needed to be superglued back onto the mirror itself. I find that with any job, one thing seems to lead to another, but I was really pleased with the finished result.

My next dreaded task was my electrical system. Electrifying a dolls house is logically simple but physically difficult – every aspect is very fragile and unless perfect connections are made, it won't work. My absolute top tip on electrical is to map it out simply and carefully on paper and keep that map with any leftover wiring bits, so that you can easily find it years down the road when fixes or additions are needed. I have a large system with everything from ceiling, wall, and table lamps to oven, range hood, picture, and floor lamps, 'fires' in my three fireplaces, a ceramic Christmas tree,



outside coach lamps, and seasonal coloured lights around my balcony. I had made several beaded ceiling lights and even a couple of seashell lights. I bought a few others, including a very impressive lithopane desk lamp for the library. Last month I showed a picture of my gorgeous crystal chandelier in the living room, a gift from my parents. It was magical when lit, but it hadn't lit in many years. I hadn't tested where the fault lay, because if it was behind the very ornate ceiling it would mean demolishing it, since it was so heavy it had to be affixed permanently several years ago.

I knew that most of my electrical system still worked, but that the initial junction splice often made all the lights flicker lately. I found the old junction splice had melted! It had two prongs and the new ones have four, which have been found to resist this melting problem. I had an unused two prong one, which I will use temporarily until my four-prong one is delivered. We added a screw-hook to support the wire going into the splice and the flickering problem was solved. I also found that although painting the tape wire makes it virtually disappear, it is much harder to trace and test later, if problems occur.

My top tip on electrical wiring is to keep it as simple as you can. Switches add a chance for problems without really adding a lot to the

overall effect. If you really want to have them, put them in easily accessible spots. Another tip is not to use a fancy ceiling or ceiling medallion – both make upside-down fixes much more difficult. You can alleviate this problem by using canopies though. These have two twist-together parts, one inserted directly into the tape wire and the other wired to the fixture (while you are upside-right!). Otherwise, try to minimize ceiling fixtures in favour of table and floor lamps, wall sconces, and swagged lamps. Finally, brad table and floor lamps directly into tape wire, rather than onto plugs and into wall outlets, which are other vulnerable points. Once working, it is very unlikely that you will want to move a fixture. I also had a temperamental canopy or two, which needed their wires tightened. I had other weak connections, generally caused by my naïve assumption that one pin in each side of a splice would suffice when two pins are recommended. I added more pins to any vulnerable points. Fixing these problems meant almost all my fixtures were now lit. I was very tempted to quit!

But, on to the dreaded chandelier. I tested the run up the wall and found it good. The problem was most likely the connection of the chandelier itself, not the ceiling run. All the furniture had to be cleared out and the fixture released from the ceiling with a thin knife

▼ BEFORE - Unlit chandelier before



▼ AFTER - Chandelier lit, after the wiring fix





▲ BEFORE - Kitchen

blade. We had originally bradded the wires in. This time we added a canopy base into the tape run, wired the chandelier into the canopy cover, twisted the cover onto its base, and voila! The chandelier lit and the ceiling was saved.

I had wired my two coach lights on either side of the front door in series, rather than in parallel, meaning the first lamp cut into the power available to the second one and would always be brighter. This was a lesson learned but it didn't really bother me enough to rewire them now. That would entail removing all the furniture, woodwork, draperies and the wallpapered panels in the two main rooms on that floor. A very big effort! I'm pretty sure one of my own front coach lamps is brighter than the other, simply because one bulb was more recently replaced. So, it happens, and I decided to live with it.

Another small but annoying problem was



▲ Front door coach lamps



▲ BEFORE - Sagging curtain rod



AFTER - Kitchen

the sag in the middle of my living room curtain rod. This was an easy fix, replacing the now warped plastic rod with a brass rod and I took the opportunity to add decorative crystal bead finials to the ends of it.

I had already repapered a couple of tired-looking rooms a few years ago and I found they still looked good and were the colours and patterns I wanted for those rooms. Years ago, not all wallpapers were acid-free and like old newspapers, they faded badly over time. Assessing the rooms now, I was still pleased with the rest. I could have redone the sewing room but as nice a pale peach wallpaper as I currently have, seems hard to come by, especially since I don't have a miniatures shop within hundreds of miles and would have to choose from my laptop's renditions.

Lastly, the kitchen cabinets. I had been so lucky to get a great kit for them many years ago but my additional wants and expectations were high and my experience extremely low.



▲AFTER - Straight rod after the fix

You might have guessed by now that I'm not a shrinking violet and I don't let much stop me. Especially in miniature, I think, what's to lose? So instead of doors and drawer fronts glued to the base cabinets, I made hinged doors and sliding drawers. Well, the drawers are still fine, though today I would have made them out of wood not card, but I had no idea at the time how to hinge the doors. I tried book-binding tape, then heavy paper, and finally ended up cutting chunks out of the cabinet face to get a better swing of my purchased brass hinges.

I started my kitchen reno by softening the countertop's exaggerated marble-look rust veins with a bit of ivory paint. The range was attached to the wall and its interior oven light and hood light above were working, so rather than risk wall and lighting damage, I simply added a small stop to the top of the bottom door's handle, to keep the oven door above it from opening too far. Centring this silver tape-wrapped stop made it look like the maker's nameplate. If I could have removed the oven safely, I would have attached an internal curved wire brace to slide through a wire loop attached to the oven's inside wall. My simpler fix had the effect I wanted though and the oven door now stops parallel to the floor. The fridge door only needed some superglue on the tip of its ingenious pin hinge. Lastly, I superglued any loose cabinet door hinges and added a little trusty museum wax adhesive to keep the doors closed yet openable. Mrs. Doolittle (the maid) is happy anyway.

Now, when someone asks to see my dolls house, I can proudly show it off. I know my parents would be very pleased with my great dolls house revamp. 



Tool shed: roof and contents

This month we finish off the tool shed exterior from last issue with a shingled roof. Then moving inside, in addition to an ample workbench and storage solutions aplenty, we make a few tools to fill the tool shed.

YOU WILL NEED

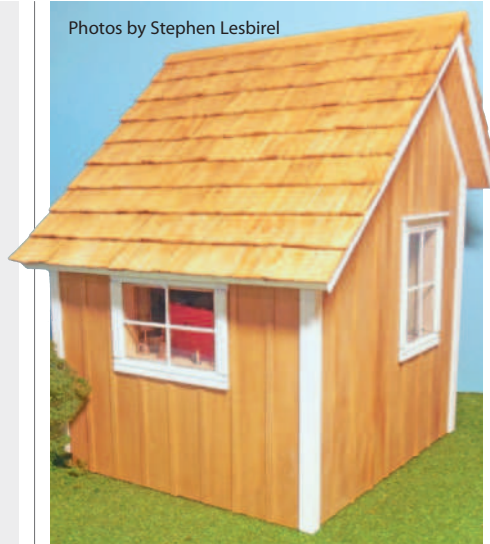
MATERIALS REQUIRED

- 3/8in (10mm) foamcore roof panels saved from last month
- Wood shingles
- 1/8in (3mm) x 1/4in (6mm) stripwood
- 1/4in (6mm) x 1/4in (6mm) stripwood
- 1/2in (13mm) corner moulding
- 1/2in (13mm) diameter dowel
- 1/8in (3mm) diameter dowels
- HD scale 2x6 strips
- 1/32in (0.8mm), 1/16in (1.6mm) and 3/32in (2.4mm) thick sheetwood
- Lightweight card
- Suede paper
- Stain paint sample card or magazine pictures with 5/8in tall cans
- 14-count cross-stitch fabric
- 5/8in (16mm) wide black/brown grosgrain ribbon
- Foil pie plate
- Steel-grey metallic, shiny red and shiny silver card
- Wire
- 1/8in (3mm) brass eyelets and tubing
- Sequin pins
- Plastic lacing
- Assorted small beads & silvery bead cap
- White acrylic paint
- Ultra-fine gold, silver, red, yellow and black Sharpie markers
- Wood stain
- White glue & super glue
- Museum wax adhesive

TOOLS REQUIRED

- Knife and steel ruler
- Small saw and mitre-box
- Grid paper, for alignment
- Needle tool
- Circles template
- 1/2in (13mm) paper punch (optional)
- Ball stylus
- Small hand drills
- Needle-nose pliers
- Emery board
- Needle files

Photos by Stephen Lesbirel



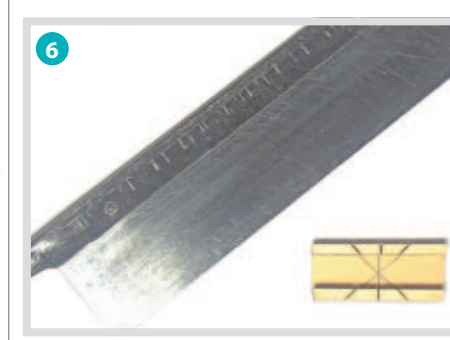
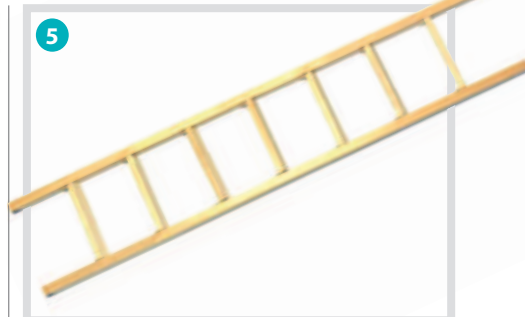
1 Mark a horizontal line on each roof panel exterior face, 1in (25mm) from the bottom edge. Mark additional horizontal lines 1in (25mm) above each previous line to align the upper edge of each run of shingles. Glue a 3/16in (5mm) wide, 1/32in (0.8mm) thick starter strip at the bottom edge of the two roof panels. Glue each shingle in the first row along the line with a small overhang at the roof sides. Cut the shingles at the side as necessary. Continue up the panels overlapping the previous row and offsetting the slits between shingles.

2 Stain the roof panels, the ridge's corner moulding, and enough shingles to complete one row. Glue the long roof panel overlapping the top edge of the short roof panel at right angles. Glue the two roof supports against the inside of the two joined panels, with their outside faces 1-1/4in (32mm) from the roof's outer edges. This supports the join and helps position the roof on the building. Complete the last row of shingles on the short roof, keeping the same spacing and cutting them as needed to meet the long roof panel's top row. Glue the corner moulding onto the ridge. Add 3/8in (10mm) wide thin painted strips along the ends and bottom edge of the roof panels, mitring them at the ridge. Tape in place until dry.



3 Cut the bench top pieces, leg pieces, stretchers, skirts, and shelf pieces from stripwood (see the cutting list). Glue the leg pieces together in pairs at right angles. Glue an end skirt into the niches of two leg pair at the top. Glue a stretcher into the niches, 3/4in (19mm) above the bottom. Glue the long skirts into the niches in the end assemblies. Glue the back shelf pieces onto the stretchers. Tape the bench top pieces together with the ends even. Glue them onto the skirts, with equal overhang front-to-back and side-to-side. Remove the tape.

4 Cut the posts from square stripwood and the skirts, fillers, and mid supports from flat stripwood. Cut the loft decking, corner braces, and base supports from 1/16in (1.6mm) thick sheetwood. Glue the shorter skirts and base supports onto the leg pairs at their ends. Glue the longer skirts and back support against the leg pairs and installed skirt and base ends. Glue the fillers to the top of the posts against the long skirts. Spot glue the corner braces to the skirts and fillers. Glue the mid supports between the longer skirts and the decking to the top.



5 Cut the ladder sides from stripwood and the treads from thick sheetwood. Angle cut the bottom of the ladder sides. Cut 3/16in (5mm) tread supports from HO strips. Glue the supports to the sides, the top and bottom treads first, and the remaining treads between the sides on their supports.

6 Cut the mitre-box's 3/8in (10mm) x 1-1/4in (32mm) back, 3/8in (10mm) x 1-1/4in (32mm) base, and 1/4in (6mm) by 1-1/4in (32mm) front from 3/32in (2.4mm) thick sheetwood. Mark a 6-point 'star' on the base, for a centre cross cut and opposite diagonals. Mark the front

and back in the middle and 3/16in (5mm) on either side of that on their facing edges. Cut the middle and the diagonals to within 3/32in (2mm) of the bottom edge, with each piece in a mitre-box. Glue the back and front against the base. [PH 13](#)

TOOL SHED CUTTING LIST

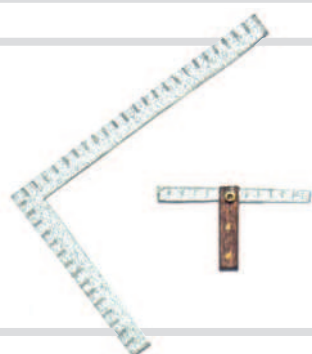
Material	Description	Quantity	Imperial	Metric	Notes
1 7/8in x 1/4in (3mm x 6mm) stripwood	workbench top	8	5in	127mm	overhang front & back
	workbench leg	8	2-7/8in	73mm	
	workbench stretcher	2	1-1/2in	38mm	
	workbench end skirt	2	1-1/2in	38mm	
	workbench front and back skirt	2	4in	102mm	
	workbench shelf	4	4-1/4in	108mm	
	loft end skirt	2	1-1/4in	32mm	
	post top front and back filler	2	1-1/2in	38mm	cut in half diagonally
	loft mid support	2	1-1/4in	32mm	
	loft front and back skirt	2	4in	102mm	
	ladder side	2	8in	203mm	angle cut the bottom
1/4in x 1/4in	loft post	4	6-1/2in	165mm	(6mm x 6mm)
1/16in (1.6mm) sheetwood	loft decking	1	1-3/4in x 4in	44mm x 102mm	cut in half diagonally
	loft corner brace	2	1in x 1in	25mm x 25mm	
	loft base end support	2	1/4in x 1-1/4in	6mm x 32mm	
	loft base back support	1	1/4in x 3-7/8in	6mm x 98mm	
	floor shelving unit back	1	3-7/8in x 5-1/2in	98mm x 140mm	
	floor shelving unit side	2	9/16in x 5-1/2in	14mm x 140mm	
	floor shelving unit kick plate	1	3/16in x 3-7/8in	5mm x 98mm	
	floor shelving unit shelf	4	1/2in x 3-7/8in	13mm x 98mm	
	floor shelving unit top	1	9/16in x 4in	14mm x 102mm	
	wall shelving unit top and base	2	5/8in x 1-5/8in	16mm x 41mm	
	wall shelving unit side	2	5/8in x 2-1/2in	16mm x 64mm	
	wall shelving unit shelf	2	5/8in x 1-1/2in	16mm x 38mm	
3/32in sheetwood	ladder tread	7	1/4in x 1-1/4in	6mm x 32mm	(2.4mm) sheetwood



7



8



9

7 Cut a 6in (152mm) length of grosgrain ribbon in half lengthwise. Remove the long threads to the opposite edges. Fold each piece in half and overcast stitch along the selvage. Fold it again and overcast. Repeat for the other piece. Then overcast the two pieces together. Cut a 1-1/2in (38mm) stripwood length and drill a slanted hole in the middle. Round one end of a 4-1/4in (114mm) thin dowel length. Sand the opposite end to fit the stripwood hole. Glue the dowel into the hole and superglue the ribbon along the centre bottom. Glue an HO strip on either side of this fringe.

8 Cut the dustpan scoop from shiny red card. Cut a 3-1/4in (83mm) thin dowel. Round the dowel's top. Emboss the lines, fold, and glue the tabs inside. Curve the centre of the retaining strip around the dowel handle, and glue the retaining strip to the dowel and the back of the scoop.

9 Cut the squares from steel-grey metallic card. Emboss and pencil-mark the inch markings. Cut the tri-square 1/8in (3mm) x 1/2in (13mm) handle from 3/32in (2.4mm) thick sheetwood. Slit the end enough to hold the embossed ruler. Superglue the brass bead and dot on rivets with gold marker.

10



11



12



10 Fray grosgrain ribbon as before, in widths three times the brush width. Fold and sew each piece in thirds (Top tip: I superglued the smallest one). Cut and file wooden handles. Superglue the handles against the fringe over wax paper. Paint, then superglue a line-embossed foil strip around each join. Trim the bristles as needed.

11 Cut 5/8in (16mm) lengths of 1/2in (13mm) dowel and paint them white. Punch foil lids and emboss a 7/16in (11mm) circle in the top. Superglue it to the top. Glue a label around to dowel. Cut 5/8in (16mm) lengths of stripwood and paint them white. Superglue a bead to the top. Glue a label onto the front.

12 Superglue a brass eyelet on each end of a green lace and a 3/8in (10mm) brass tubing length into one of them. Coil and tie the lace to hang on a sequin pin inside the tool shed. Superglue a black bead to each end of a red or yellow lace. Superglue two short wires in one end bead. Make a 1-1/2in (38mm) figure eight in this lace. Cut a card strip and glue it shut around the centre.

13



14



15



13 Cut the tool box from shiny red card, pierce the two holes in the lid, emboss the lines, and fold. Scrape the tabs for better adhesion and glue them to the inside. Form the wire handle, leaving one end straight, feed the ends through the holes in the lid, and bend the straight end outwards to hold it in place. Glue shiny silver paper 'latches' to the lid and front.

14 Cut the bucket side and base from metallic card. Pierce the bail holes and form the wire bail handle around a broom handle or spool of thread. Glue the side tab shut and the base to the bottom. Slide the bail ends through the holes and bend them upwards to secure.

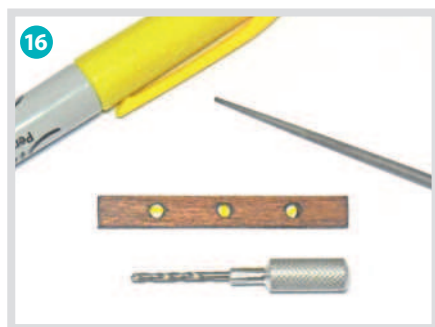
15 Cut two glove patterns from suede paper. Fold each piece and glue it together, leaving the cuffs open. Mark a 1/4in (6mm) stripwood length red. Superglue a 1/16in (2mm) by 5/16in (8mm) round-tipped strip along the bottom and mark a silver label in the centre of the square. Cut a 5/8in (16mm) length of 1/8in (3mm) dowel, mark it with silver Sharpie, and superglue it to a bead cap. Mark a Sharpie black switch to the side.



© Ruth Flewelling Lesbirel 2023

Ruth's Top Tip!

"The paint can shelf under the lumber loft uses a very short leftover piece of cornice that I saved for over a year before I found the perfect place for it!"



16 Cut two 1/4in (6mm) by 2in (51mm) thinnest sheetwood pieces and a slightly smaller clear plastic strip. Drill and file three holes in the sheetwood (see template). Paint or stain. Mark three yellow lines on the plastic aligned with the holes – diagonally, horizontally and vertically. Superglue the plastic sandwiched between the sheetwood pieces.



17 Cut the sheetwood shelving pieces. Glue HO strip shelf supports to the sides of both shelving units. Glue the shelves onto all the supports. Glue the kickplate against the floor unit's shelf supports and bottom shelf. Glue the top onto both units and the base onto the sides of the wall unit. Glue cross-stitch cloth onto the upper portion of the floor unit's back. Arrange and pencil outline the tools on this cloth. Affix the tools with museum wax. Glue the back into the floor unit.



18 Cut seven 2-1/2in (64mm) stripwood pieces. Glue three pieces together to make an I-beam top. Glue the legs into the I-beam as shown. Dot on nails with silver Sharpie. 



The Little Dollhouse Company, Toronto, Canada
www.thelittledollhousecompany.com
 Hobby Builders Supply
www.miniatures.com

Mini hacks

Hacks, we have all heard of them - and may have even tried a few - but do you know it's true meaning? A hack is 'any trick, shortcut, skill, or novelty method that increases productivity and efficiency, in all walks of life.' Yes, that means your miniature life too! So, here are a variety of hacks that may help you along the way, be it when making, decorating, furnishing, displaying or shopping for your next piece.

Put your stamp on it

There are endless beautiful stamps available, featuring various patterns, motifs and characters, so next time you're in the mini market for some floor or wall tiles, create a truly unique design.

With your chosen one(s), simply stamp it out as many times as you need onto some thick card (remember to press a little harder with some and not so much with others as it will give the effect of a worn floor!).

Once finished, use a craft knife and metal (if possible) ruler to cut out the complete design, or sections of it as I have done here.

Now you're swimming in tiny tiles, mix them up, turn them round and create your desired look before fixing them in place.



Make a note of this one

We have all been there... a tiny piece has fallen into a tricky place within your scene, unable to be retrieved without knocking the whole room flying - only to be left there to niggle at you until you finally give in and take everything out to get it! Next time this happens (yes, it is inevitable!) take a small post-it note and fold it back on itself to give a little more stability.

Now, holding the non-sticky end, carefully reach in and pick up that tiny treasure using the sticky surface. These little sticky notes are wonderful at picking up dust too!

Another top hack is to also use Museum Wax to hold pieces in place. It is as long standing as you wish, damage free and oh so easily removed too.

The whole world is out there

The struggle is real. I've been there. Done that. Got the second (and third) house! But, when space truly is no longer on your side, hack it! Expand your house to wherever you wish by adding a closed door to an external wall, instantly creating depth and the illusion of further rooms to any house or roombox. Or, go one step further and create a second inner wall and fit your door.

Before fixing it in place, decorate 'inside' - add a light, a small piece of furniture or perhaps some items on the floor.

Now add in your new wall just a little way in from the external wall, but this time leave the door ajar to allow for only a glimpse of what is beyond.





I'll be back in a second...

The big debate - add characters or not? The perfect hack for this very situation is to position items - such as an open paper, a chair pushed away from a busy desk or a sink of bubbly water - to give the effect of life and realism, without the need for people. The photos shown here are of two commissioned pieces I completed, showing this technique in practice.

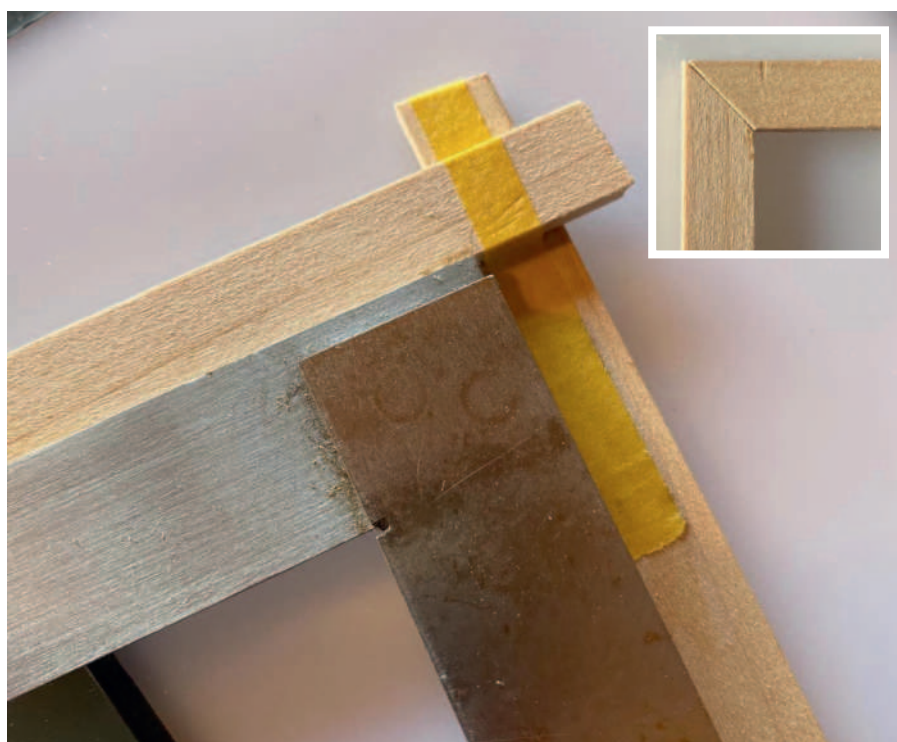
Measure twice and cut once

If you are requiring a nice join - perhaps for a mini frame, or two pieces of carpet - but have limited tools, give this quick hack a try.

Overlap both pieces of material accordingly and ensure they are securely held together with a little tape.

Make sure you are on a strong surface and clamp down the materials. Next, cut through both at once, diagonally down the middle.

The result - a neat fitting join. 🏠



HERE ARE A FEW MORE HACKS TO KEEP YOU GOING:

- Paint, weather and distress corrugated cardboard to create effective tin sheets
- Use printable fabric to get the exact design you want for your mini furnishings
 - Use small bread bag clips to label and organise house wiring cables
- Fish out your glasses repair case and make good use of the tiny screw drivers
- Make small pilot holes using a thumb tack
- Wrap a piece of masking tape around your drill bits to get depth first time
- Grab an ice-cube tray to hold small components to save them getting dropped, lost or taken by the cat
- Use a magnetic 'pin cushion' for holding
 - and picking up - nails and screws or anything else that may have escaped the ice cube tray!

We all know materials can be expensive, especially when such a small amount is needed for our miniatures, so here's a few hacks to minimise (and hopefully avoid) any waste:

- Cut wallpapers and flooring shapes in cardboard before cutting your final materials, to ensure the size is accurate
- Apply papers and flooring onto cardboard for easy removal when redecorating
- Make small amounts of wood filler; simply mix sawdust with a little glue
- Place a rubber band around an open paint can to wipe your brush on, keeping paint off the side of the can
- Apply duct tape to the back of the sandpaper sheets, as it allows for the sandpaper to remain flexible enough to sand a tight radius, but make it's far more durable
- Sharpen blunt scissors by cutting into scrap sandpaper - Store your glue bottle upside-down in a glass for easy application and getting a little more out too! - Create your own paint swatches using lolly/coffee sticks. Just paint one end and write the name of the colour on the other. Not only is this a record of its applied finish for future reference, but also a handy matcher to take with you when shopping, to ensure any new pieces fit in with your decor.

Marrakesh magic

Moi Ali's quick make Moroccan ideas can actually be used in many settings.



YOU WILL NEED

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Polyfilla
- Paint
- Glue
- Card
- Images of tiles
- Gloss varnish (optional)
- Fabric
- 2x Turkish bookmarks
- 2x Turkish rugs
- Wadding
- Foam
- MDF
- 2x turned posts
- Piece of stripwood roughly 1cm square
- Wood stain
- Shoe polish
- Embellishments
- 2x fretwork corner pieces
- Small tacks

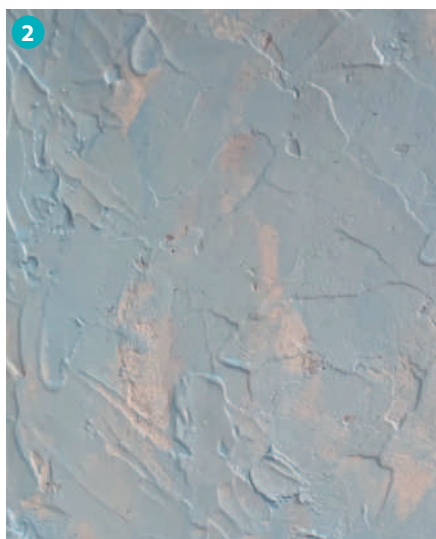
Moi says...

"In the August 2021 issue I showed how to make this Moroccan scene. I gave step-by-step information on how to build the structure and produce a realistic façade. So if you built the diorama, and now want to decorate and furnish the interior, or you want to do your own Moroccan interior inside a roombox, this day bed/low seating and North African decorating tutorial is for you.

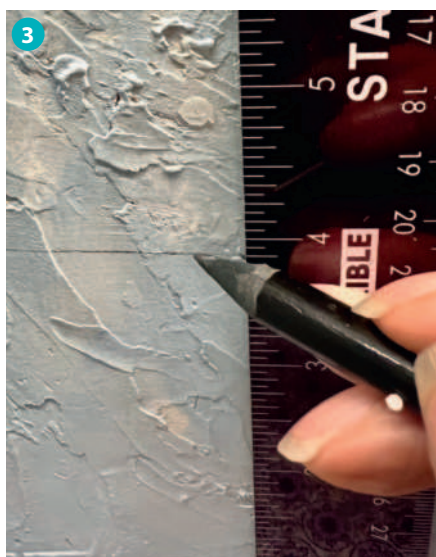
To make the cushions I used cheap Turkish bookmarks, which are sold in dolls house shops as carpet runners. If you can't get them, use wide braid or fabric of your choice."



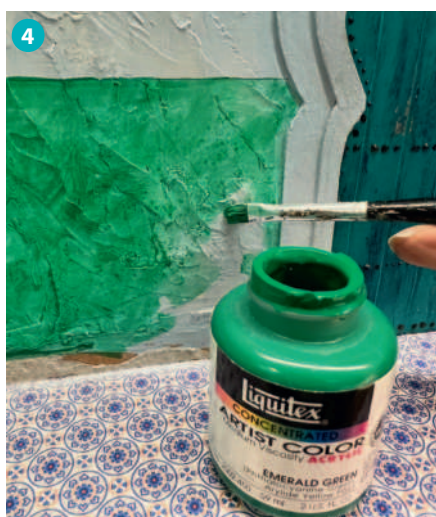
1 Cover the interior walls with filler to create a textured render/plasterwork.



2 Paint walls with a light-coloured distressed wash of watered down paint.



3 Mark the walls halfway or so with a pencil line.



4 Paint below the pencil line in a diluted vibrant contrast colour.



5 Sand the painted wall for a more worn, distressed effect.



6 Print out scaled down images of tiles (and, if you wish, a street sign or house name for the exterior).



7 Glue the tiles onto card. If you wish, add gloss varnish.



8 Cut MDF to the desired dimensions of your seating.



9 Paint the top of the MDF to match the fabric for the base. Paint the edges to match the tiles (as there will likely be 'show-through').



10 Cut scrap card marginally smaller than the seat base.



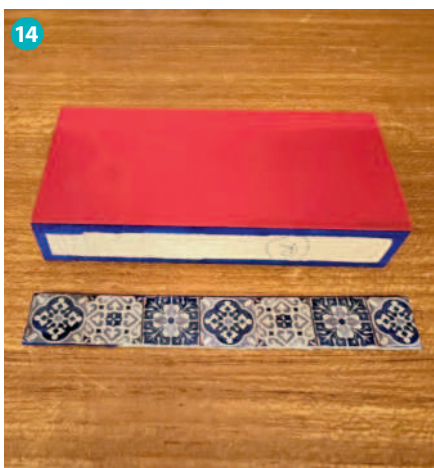
11 Cut foam to the size of the seat base. Glue the foam to the card. [PMs](#)



12 Cut fabric large enough to wrap over the sides of the foam.



13 Wrap fabric around the foam and glue to the card on the reverse. Be careful not to get glue on the front or sides of the fabric.



14 Glue tiles around the visible parts of the base. Glue the seat pad in place.



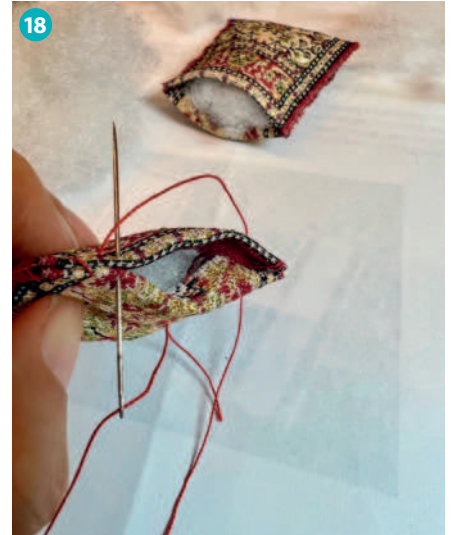
15 Cut the book marks in half.



16 Stitch along the sides but leave the top open.



17 Stuff cushions with wadding.



18 Slipstitch the top of the stuffed cushion.



19 Glue thin bands of card to the top and bottom of the two rugs. When dry, 'hang' the rugs by using tacky wax along the card bands. Add any other decorative features to the walls.



20 Gather embellishments such as fretwork pieces and decorative elements made from chipboard.



21 Stain the turned posts, stripwood piece and fretwork. When dry, polish to a sheen using brown shoe polish.



22 Glue the posts and stripwood, and ensure they stay put by hammering in a small pin/tack at each touchpoint.



23 Glue fretwork in place, one in each corner. Now dress the room with North African accessories. 🏠

Moi says...

"Accessorise the room with Middle Eastern miniatures. The Cairo table was from a kit by Arjen Spinhoven, I made the books from images from the internet and crafted oranges from polymer clay."





Crazy for Clarice

From heavy metal to pretty pottery, Moi Ali discovers why a former naval blacksmith turned his hand to miniature tea sets.

A number of things came together, creating the perfect conditions for a former Ministry of Defence blacksmith based in Portsmouth Naval Base to start creating the most perfect Art Deco pottery in miniature.

Robert Wilbur – Bob to his friends – has always enjoyed making models. He told me:

“All my life, I have loved making anything miniature. Model boats, planes, trains, dolls houses and lots of other miniatures, particularly those made of metal. I’d never thought of making anything from pottery though.”

Last year Bob, 72, who had hung up

his blacksmithing tools and retired some years back, was looking for a new hobby. He signed up for a pottery course at a local college. As a collector of full-size Clarice Cliff, her designs were an obvious starting point. He told me: “I have always liked her style, as she was so ahead of her time with her bright colours and vibrant geometric patterns. Her popularity has really increased since the film about her life was released last year, but I have been a fan for a long time.”

Bob originally intended to make a miniature Clarice Cliff shop full of her wares. That sounds like my perfect miniature! It was a daunting project so, as he put it, “I thought I would do the hardest bit first. ▶







Moi says...

"There are very few miniature makers of Clarice Cliff. I have a few treasured pieces in my collection by Muriel Hopwood of Miniatura fame. Sally Meekins also makes pieces of Clarice (as well as other iconic designers) and you may well find some hand painted items on metal, including the occasional set by Victoria Fasken."

CLARICE CLIFF

Given the vibrancy and vivid colourways of her designs, it's hard to believe that Clarice Cliff was a product of the Victorian era. Born in 1891 in Stoke-on-Trent, in the heart of the Staffordshire 'Potteries', she was sent to work in a ceramics factory at the tender age of 13. She thrived and her talent was identified to such an extent that she was given her own studio. This enabled her creativity to flourish and in 1927 her ground-breaking 'Bizarre' wares were launched. They are as popular today as they were almost a century ago.

That's why I started making little tea sets at the college, to use as stock in the shop." His intention was not to make to sell, but simply to make for pleasure as part of his dream miniature build. That is, after all, what retirement is all about. But for some reason Bob decided to put one of his makes up for sale, just to test the market. He explained: "I listed a teapot last year on eBay. I really did not think anyone would be interested in it, but it got a few bids and to my amazement it sold really quickly and for a great price, so I started making more... and more and more! It's not a business as such, more a way to help fund this fascinating hobby and to help pay the bills for the kiln. I've been so busy making miniature pots that I haven't had time to make the Clarence Cliff shop!"

Teapots led to whole tea sets, sandwich sets, dinner services... All are hand potted and hand painted – Bob appears to be a natural, instinctive artist. His range of products grew, and his designs now encompass much of Clarice Cliff's iconic repertoire. Bob quickly attracted a strong following of miniaturists (myself included), and he has a fan base on both sides of the Atlantic. He told me: "If I'd known the price they would fetch, I would've started making these years ago!" His pieces are, in fact, very affordable as he makes primarily for pleasure and is not running a business aimed at making a profit. I bought a pair of his lovely decorative plates for my 1930s dolls house, and so intrigued was I by the maker that I decided to ask Bob a bit about himself. The story was so fascinating that I just had to share it with you, dear reader!

What is so inspiring about Bob's story is first, that he discovered a new talent well into retirement. Second, he has been able to build up a following that has helped towards the cost of a new garden shed and kiln. Third, he really enjoys what he's doing, and finally, he has brought such pleasure to so many miniaturists in the process! What's not to like! 🏠



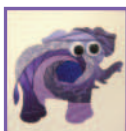
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The fabric of Tudor life

Discovering the 'material world' of The House of Tudor with IGMA Artisan, Lilli Bass.

Queen Elizabeth I in 1/12th scale, her costume inspired by The Ditchley Portrait



▲ Collared by incredible detail

The lost dress

As we make the transition from the second Elizabethan age to become Caroleans, this spring also marks 420 years since the death of Queen Elizabeth I. Yet, despite the passage of more than four centuries, we remain as enthralled by the age of the Tudors as ever. Queen Elizabeth I and her parents, Henry VIII and the ill-fated Anne Boleyn, prove that familiar faces can stand the test of time from an era long before media went social. Their lives left behind a legacy of discovery reaching into the present day. None of these discoveries more remarkable than the rise to prominence of the Bacton Alter Cloth. Held sacred for centuries by residents of the Herefordshire rural idyll, the cloth was hidden in plain sight on the walls of the village church, St. Faiths, in 1909.

More than a hundred years later in 2015, the cloth, which dates from the 1590s, was located during research by writer, Ruth Elizabeth Richardson, whilst working on a biography of an important figure in Bacton's history.

Anne Boleyn



Anne wears a headdress called the French hood



Blanche Parry was born in the village around 1507, going on to become not only an attendant to Queen Elizabeth I, but Chief Gentlewoman of the Privy Chamber. So trusted was Blanche she also became Keeper of Jewels. Today it is believed that the Alter Cloth is made from the fabric of a beautiful, heavily embroidered dress given to Bacton by Queen Elizabeth I, following Blanche's death in 1590. By the time of Elizabeth's own death in March 1603 she owned an astonishing two thousand dresses, but whilst some of her other possessions remain intact, the Bacton Alter Cloth is believed to be the only garment to have survived. Many others were sadly destroyed when the Royal Wardrobe caught light during the Great Fire of London. We do though, still have the beautifully drawn depictions of these luscious clothes in the numerous paintings of Elizabeth, and it was these which formed part of the extensive research undertaken by newly appointed IGMA Artisan, Lilli Bass, when designing her Tudor collection. [▶](#)



▲ Anne's famous necklace

Henry VIII



▲ A 'gem' of a detail

History in the making

The collection, comprising both Elizabeth and her parents in 1/12th scale, is an exceptional representation of royal fashions of the day. "It was an era I hadn't really explored in my doll making and it is so iconic and lavishly beautiful, that I had to go there!" says Lilli. "I began researching with my various fashion history books and then moved online to fashion history sites, with descriptions and images of paintings done of these figures. I also watched several hours of documentaries and movies."

The paintings Lilli studied throughout her research may well have included The Rainbow Portrait, the embroidery of Queen Elizabeth's dress bearing an uncanny resemblance to that of the Bacton Alter Cloth. It was however, the acclaimed 'Ditchley Portrait' of



▲ An eye for detail! Henry VIII eyes are amazingly realistic

Elizabeth by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger on which Lilli's exceptionally detailed 1/12th scale costume was modelled. "Fabric is so important in miniature fashion, and lavish fabrics such as those seen in the portraits were nearly impossible to find. So, I had make my own fabrics for Henry and Elizabeth. With Anne, I was able to use silks and brocades that were in scale."

Lilli also takes great care in recreating Anne Boleyn's most famous accessory, her gold 'B' necklace. What happened to the real necklace remains a mystery many would love to solve. It would be lovely to believe the story that three of the tiny pearls were set within the Imperial State Crown. The idea that Anne followed history into the modern age, the crown worn by Queen Elizabeth II, her many times great niece during the Coronation in 1953, is one which holds great appeal. But truthfully, no one knows what became of this prized possession. "For Henry, I studied his paintings and created his fabric from silk, hand embroidery and simulating a 'slash and puff' method of pulling white silk through cuts in the fabric," explains Lilli. "With Elizabeth, I used a combination of

machine sewing a pearlized trellis pattern on silk, and then hand sewing beads at the intersections and embellishing with tiny crystals and metal findings."

Fit the mould

It isn't only the historical costumes demonstrating Lilli's keen eye for stunning detail. The expressive faces of each figure are created using Lilli's unique moulds. "All of them came from my original sculpts made from polymer clay, of which I then used to make plaster moulds," she reveals. "The plaster moulds are then used for porcelain creation. With Henry for instance, I used paintings as reference for sculpting his face so that I could recreate him in porcelain as accurately as possible."

The faces and costumes of all three dolls are stunning, but the most exceptional aspect of Lilli's Tudor collection lies in another aspect of her original sculpts. It's impossible not to find yourself instantly drawn to the clavicle of both Queen Elizabeth and Anne Boleyn. This is art at the very highest level. But just how does Lilli achieve this depth of realism? "Well, because I am able to sculpt a model

for a mould, I take great care to represent the human body as realistically as possible in that initial sculpt," she says. "I've studied human anatomy and figure proportions for a long time and the neck area, with the muscle and bones, is a small detail but adds so much to the realistic picture I'm trying to achieve."

With a portfolio comprising dolls from various eras, Lilli is one of our most diverse artisans, and is rightly extremely proud to have achieved that IGMA Artisan status, an extremely well-deserved accolade. "This collection of the Tudors was so enlightening to create and is my favourite collection to date! I hope to keep bringing fashion history to life in miniature and more varied and realistic porcelain figures to the miniature world."

And we mustn't forget that Henry VIII had five other wives; Catherine of Aragon, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard and Catherine Parr, each offering plenty of scope for Lilli to add to her remarkable Tudor collection. 🏠



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Shandy's bar

Reader Jo Lockyer, from Bristol, was inspired by cocktail bars she'd seen while on holiday and wanted to make one of her own... which she named after her cat!



I've always been a doll collector and have a vast collection of vintage Sindy dolls and furniture but eventually ran out of space for this, so moved to miniatures which I assumed would take up less space. This was about five years ago, however after building my first miniature house I was totally addicted and now my collection has increased massively!

My daughters have now grown out of their toys so I have taken over their playroom and currently have about six large houses, four large shops plus various roomboxes and smaller buildings. I love escaping to the miniature world and find it both relaxing and rewarding. I have built houses from scratch using flatpack kits as well as renovating existing properties acquired second hand. I like doing both modern and period styles, both have their own challenges and rewards.

In relation to the cocktail bar, I just liked the idea of creating something modern but funky and following a family holiday I just loved all the sparkle and colours of the cocktail bars in the resort. I started looking at all the details and wondering if I could recreate it in miniature. I didn't want a large property or a basic roombox, so I purchased a market stall kit and adapted it to become an outdoor bar.

I always like to pre-plan my creations so spent a year or two collecting and making all the miniatures I would need for it as well as finding the right items for the décor. I wanted it modern and sparkly with a black/red/pink/silver colour palette. Some of the





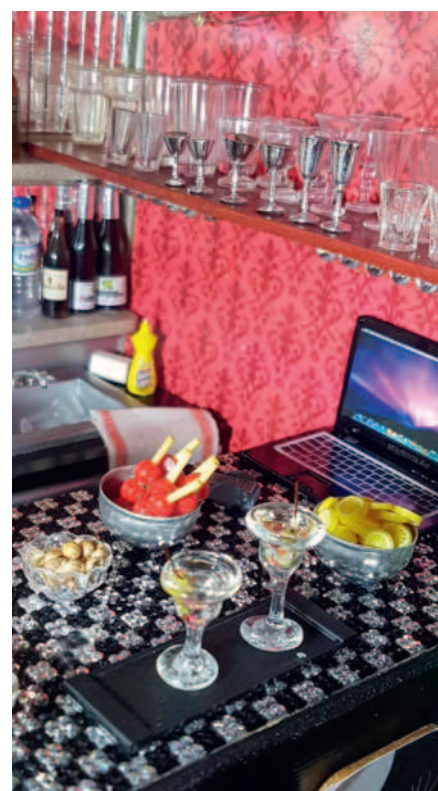
items used for the décor were basic craft items such as stick-on gems, paper foil and mirror tile sheets. Some of the papers used were samples that a friend gave to me after decorating her real size lounge and I was also donated the lovely miniature floor tiles at the front of the bar by a fellow miniature collecting friend.

I specifically tried to collect as many different bottles of spirits and soft drinks to make it realistic as possible as well as glasses and cocktail making items. I made my own napkins, placemats, speakers and bowls of nibbles from various household items. The plants are made from full-size perfume bottle lids and fish tank plants. I hunted around websites for suitable cocktail bar furniture and found a lovely seller on eBay who designed some of the doll figures. I have added my own accessories to some of the figures and re-dressed some basic dolls with Pippa or Monster High clothing in order to have an interesting array of characters!

The most difficult part of the project was probably the build, as the market stall was sloped and did not have side walls. I had to re-jig some of the parts to ensure the bar sat



horizontal and make my own legs to support it, plus I needed to create my own walls (made from cake decorating platters). I also extended the front floor of the bar with some hardboard to create a little extra space. I think the most enjoyable part was filling it once decorated, as I just love all the little bottles on the shelves in front of the mirror tiles and the miniature cocktails and cocktail making accessories are just so cute! I just love making and talking about miniatures! 🏠



The Whole Kit & Caboodle:

LASER CRAFTS BY MARK

Moi Ali reviews some deco-tastic kits this month!



A year or so ago I came across a maker on Etsy who was offering something a bit different: mid-century modern items, Charles Rennie Mackintosh mirrors, Gothic chairs, Art Deco pieces and modern bits and pieces too. They looked really well-designed yet were incredibly affordable. He had loads of five-star reviews so I placed an order. I was not disappointed! And so I discovered Mark Berbezier, who runs Laser Crafts by Mark.

What impresses me – aside from the range of items – is how much thought has gone into the design stage, so that joins are carefully hidden to give the finished piece a more realistic appearance. Kits are made to ensure

precision painting too, so it's easy to achieve a professional finish. In some kits, such as the drinks trolley and sideboard featured here, Mark even includes a jig for perfect alignment of pieces. No more wonky legs or tilting tables!

The mirror kit comes with a mirrored set of laser cut pieces and identical MDF pieces that are interchangeable. I made both a mirror and a wall panel from the one kit and by mounting them on thin card rather than using the back panels that Mark provides, I now have those two panels leftover to make a screen with!

I am in love with the drinks trolley, which exudes Art Deco glamour, and the sideboard works in either a Deco or a modern interior – I went down a 1970s route with mine. Laser Crafts by Mark is a must for any lover of miniatures from Gothic to Deco right through to the modern era. 🏠

Moi says...

"If you can, stitch in natural daylight or using a daylight bulb – and use a magnifier if you have one."

THE FACTS

Buy from:
www.etsy.com/uk/shop/LaserCraftsByMark

Cost: Sideboard £15, trolley £8, door/wall panels (x2) £4, and mirror kit £7.50

Additional materials needed:
Glue and paint or stain

Specialist tools needed: None

Experience: Confident beginner

EXCLUSIVE GIVEAWAY!

Would you like to win one of these lovely little kits?

One lucky reader will win kits to make the two doors/panels, the mirrors, the trolley and the sideboard, all courtesy of Mark.

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Competition closes 30th April 2023. Good luck!

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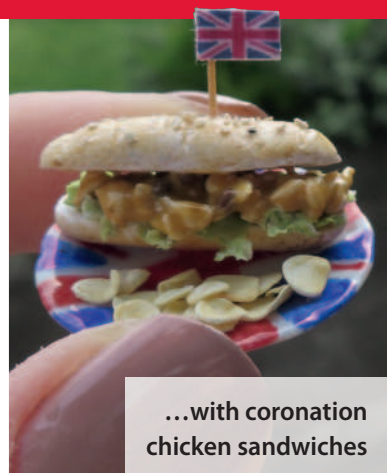
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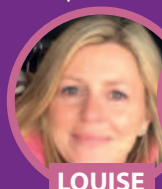
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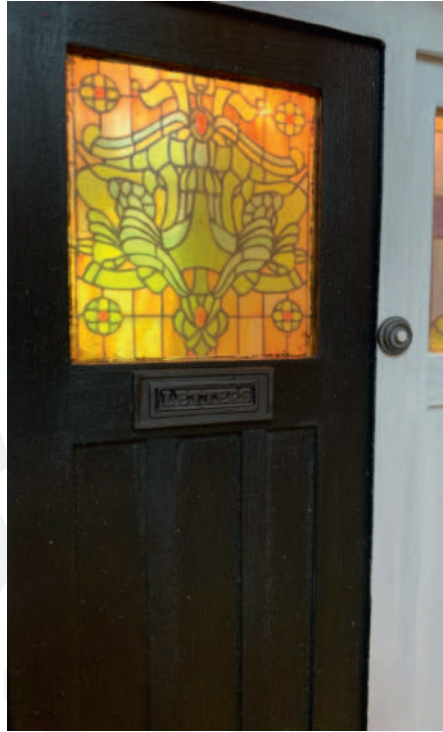
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Crazy for Clarice



Reader Project: Shandy's bar

