



Great Hall

Peter Westcott, 1983
Exploring the World Gallery

Issue No. 53

Thursday, November 12, 2014 The Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures

Tucson, Arizona

Peter Westcott's *Great Hall* (1983) captures the immense, airy space of early Tudor halls in a way almost inconceivable on the small scale. He magnificently recreates the high, arch-braced hammerbeam ceiling, drawing the eye upwards to the heavens in architectural wonder. The long, dark timber of the floor draws the gaze inward, just as the heavy paneling on the walls wrap the space in a dark warmth that is both daunting and profound. This is a space for intimidating rivals and impressing guests, a hall that demands whispered voices and respectful passage. There is no fire burning in the hearth, but the ghost of past roaring flames can be felt in imagined red flickering along the walls, casting somber shadows – without the heat of these flames the room is drafty and cold. Three suits of armor stand vigil, hollow men trapped in duty, unsullied reminders of past oaths and great victories.

Westcott is a master at small-scale reproductions, with a successful career in architectural model making long before his journey into dollhouse miniatures took flight. A favorite artist of our Museum Founder, Patricia Arnell, Westcott's *Great Hall* is also a unique example of his ability to collaborate: the gorgeous furnishings of this Tudor hall were done by fellow miniaturist George Becker, a partnership in honor of the 1983 N.A.M.E. Regional Houseparty.* It was at this



Great Hall by Peter Westcott, 1983. Detail of arched hammerbeam ceiling. Exploring the World Gallery. Photo by Emily Wolverton.



Great Hall by Peter Westcott, 1983. Exploring the World Gallery. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

Houseparty that Pat acquired the stunning model, the sole creation by the talented duo. In her article "A Grand Collaboration: Teamwork in Tudor," author Mary Durland Fields writes about how the two men worked together to create such an authentic period piece.¹ Westcott, who admires the Early Tudor period, relished the opportunity to conceive of his own design, gathering his inspiration from favorite books and photographs: the giant window is a copy "from the dining room at Haddon Hall, an English manor house begun in the 12th century," and the fireplace he copied "from one in Layer Marney, a manor home near Colchester, England."² He used frosted acrylic for the window's glass, carefully drawing the would-be leaded pattern by hand with ink; large windows such as this would have shown off the wealth of the estate, as glass was very expensive. Becker kept in line with the opulence, upholstering the dining room chairs in silk,³ and using rosewood alongside other rare woods for his pieces, which include an absolutely stunning armoire and pulpit. The furnishings are as solid and substantial as their full-scale counterparts, adding to the masculine tone of the room. Westcott captured every rich detail, including recreating the white stucco walls by mixing latex paint with fine grain sand.⁴ Becker's table is placed before the vacant hearth, two empty chairs patiently awaiting hushed conversations of war or inheritance. The soft blue light behind the high arched window has an almost eerie feel, as though at any moment one might hear the clap of



thunder or the slap of wind and rain.

Pat added her own special touches to the piece after acquiring it. On the right wall are two axes, one long and one short, both by David Sciacca. Sciacca also created all three magnificent suits of armor, impeccably recreated down to the last joint, as well as the swords found displayed above the fireplace – so authentic that they could cut the skin if mishandled. The silver pieces found in the *Great Hall* add sparkle to the stark palette, with artisan names that resonate with miniaturists the world over: sterling goblets by Pete Acquisto; a Monteith bowl by Obadiah Fisher; and an urn by Eugene Kupjack. The bouquet sculpture by Robert Olszewski offers up the one small burst of color, a focal point of beauty and feminine influence in an otherwise formidable chamber.



Great Hall by Peter Westcott, 1983. Portraits of “Cardinal” Westcott (top) and “Viscount” Becker (bottom). Miniature portraits by Helen Joan Hairrell. Exploring the World Gallery. Photos by Emily Wolverton.



Great Hall by Peter Westcott, 1983. Detail of Westcott’s high arched window. Exploring the World Gallery. Photo by Emily Wolverton.



Great Hall by Peter Westcott, 1983. Detail of one of David Sciacca’s three suits of armor. Exploring the World Gallery. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

Art imitates life, and the *Great Hall*, like the many great Tudor halls which inspired its creation, is a piece that stands proudly in timeless beauty. Despite its small scale, the room carries an enormous presence, pulling the visitor back in time through the centuries. A delightful testament to Westcott and Becker’s friendship can be seen in the two portraits on the left wall, a sneaky addition by Westcott made to surprise Becker, painted by Helen Joan Hairrell.⁵ A lasting tribute to these great men in their great hall.

Emily Wolverton
The Mini Time Machine Museum



Great Hall by Peter Westcott, 1983. Detail of David Sciacca’s swords and Westcott’s paneled fireplace. Exploring the World Gallery. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

♣National Association of Miniature Enthusiasts. NAME hosts “houseparties” each year as gatherings for miniaturists to share their work, collaborate, and participate in workshops. www.miniatures.org
1 Fields, Mary Durland. “A Grand Collaboration: Teamwork in Tudor.” *Miniature Collector*. Number 56. January/February, 1987. P 18.
2 Ibid. “[Layer Marney] was begun in the late 1400s and, like Haddon Hall, was added to and altered though the centuries.”
3 Ibid., p. 20
4 Ibid., p. 18
5 Ibid., p. 18