

Minis Magnified

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A GENTLEMEN'S SPACE

Location: Exploring the World Gallery



Many men who visit The Mini-Time Machine Museum are often surprised by how quickly they are drawn into this miniature world. Unlike their sisters and wives, most men did not grow up playing with dollhouses and do not expect to find themselves so engaged and intrigued by the museum's variety of displays. To their amazement, they find themselves noting the craftsmanship of the designs, the quality of the woodwork, and the unfaltering attention to detail. Often the displays trigger memories of another miniature pastime- model railroads- with which they are perhaps more familiar. It might be shocking for these men to discover that many of the world's finest and most successful miniature artisans are in fact men, many of whom are featured in our collection. In honor of Father's Day, we thought it fitting to celebrate one of these male artisans- Ray Whitledge.

In our Exploring the World Gallery, you will find A Gentleman's Space (acquired 1995) which was built by Mr. Whitledge, who began his life's passion at an early age building model houses as a teenager.¹ Judging by the furnishings of this particular roombox, one may wonder if it was actually James Bond who inspired the décor. It is nothing less than a lavish dressing room, complete with a

marble hot tub and expansive shower. There is a welcoming fireplace, perfected by a loyal hound and a nearby bottle of cognac. On the walls, we see gorgeous paintings; on the table we see a variety of magazines and periodicals. The great novel *War & Peace* is nonchalantly displayed beside a trophy, both of which are placed under the formidable gaze of the stuffed head of a moose- a winning combination for any bachelor seeking to impress. Hunting boots lay discarded on the floor, while slippers lay at the ready near the glowing embers and, just down the hall, one can see running shoes placed neatly beside a soccer ball. Truly, this is a gentleman of leisure with far-reaching interests and flair.

This room is typical of Whitledge's capacity to dazzle his viewers, combining a "talent for full-size decorating with [his] impeccable taste for elegance."² Although he has worked with different partners over the years³, his shrewd eye for color, texture and lighting remains his hallmark, one which is sought by the most discerning collectors, including our own museum's founder, Pat Arnell. Pat was delighted to find *A Gentleman's Space*, enjoying the uniqueness of the room's setting as compared to her already growing collection. She purchased the piece in 1995 at a miniature trade show, already curious about his work and fine

reputation. Today, Whitledge continues to sell his work exclusively at miniaturist shows and by commission, and more recently he and his current business partner, Scott Burgess, have begun offering highly sought-after workshops.

This Father's Day, if you can't afford to buy Dad an expensive retreat to a hunting lodge, or a fishing trip off the Alaskan coast, why not treat him to something on a smaller scale? Bring him to the museum to take a peek at our *Satori Wine* display within a wine box (Arnell 2005), then surprise him with a bottle of his favorite merlot. Or better yet, show him our weird and wonderful *Butcher Shop* by Ron & April Gill (2006), then let him select the finest sirloin for his dinner that night! And be sure to point out all the wonderful male artisans along the way, making our miniature world a richer place.



1. *A Reference Guide to Miniature Makers Marks*. 1996. p. 481
2. "The Whitledge Influence." Sara B. Wallace. *Dollhouse Miniatures*. September 1998. Vol. 28, No 9. P 31.
3. "The partnership known to the world as Whitledge-Burgess, LLC was formed in 2004 when Ray Whitledge and Scott Burgess met at Chicago International. Prior to that, Ray had long been known for his exquisite miniature room settings and custom furniture under the name of Whitledge Associates." *Interior Design in Miniature*. 2011. Whitledge-Burgess LLC. Anne Gerdes Web Design. 7 June 2011. <<http://whitledgeburgess.com>>