



MISS HAVISHAM DOME

Pat Arnell, 2002

Exploring the World Gallery

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The Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures

Tucson, Arizona

March is National Reading Month in the United States, a tribute made by the National Education Association in honor of Dr. Seuss, whose birthday fell on March 2nd (he would've have been 109 this year). Here in Tucson, Arizona, we will celebrate the love of reading on March 9 – 10, 2013, with our annual [Tucson Festival of Books](#), hosted by the University of Arizona. The Festival will promote literacy in Southern Arizona and bring authors, illustrators and booksellers to a family-friendly setting that Dr. Seuss would have endorsed whole-heartedly! With the applause of books ringing loudly in the air, it seems fitting to shine our mini-light on literature. After all, as any good miniature enthusiast will tell you, miniatures and storytelling go hand-in-hand. The process of scaling down one's environment gives way to a careful process of elimination – the judicious selection of details to reveal a singular moment in time. Like an author with a pen, the miniaturist sets a scene: the disheveled bookcase, the dress laid across the bed, soup bubbling on the stove.



Miss Havisham Dome (detail).
Figure by James Carrington.
Photo by Emily Wolverton.

Each small note is but a piece of the grand tune, telling a story of the particular character dwelling in this smaller, parallel world. Every miniaturist develops personal histories for his or her small figures and rooms – the secret tales of an omnipotent creator. Conversely, a miniaturist can also choose to recreate the stories of others, bringing the written word into the third

dimension. Such is the case with our *Miss Havisham Dome*, created by our museum founder, Pat Arnell in 2002.

The Charles Dickens character of Miss Havisham, whose vengeful and pitiful existence is detailed in the novel *Great Expectations*, has been devotedly examined by scholars for well over a century. Here at The Mini Time Machine Museum, Pat Arnell has captured the

reclusive, bitter spinster in 1:12 scale, sheltering her in a glass dome as one might display the dead specimen of a moth or flower. How appropriate then is this dome which houses her, a time capsule for a character whose very existence was frozen in time, self-condemned to misery.

The Havisham figure itself was made by James Carrington, an IGMA* Fellow renowned for figures with rich and apparent histories. As Carrington himself said in an interview for *Miniature Collector*, “I believe that there is far more beauty in a face that has earned its history and find the young, perfect face bland and boring. Even in stillness a figure should have life and suggest a story to the viewer.”¹ Carrington's Miss Havisham is no exception: dressed in the dingy golden hues of her soiled wedding gown,



Miss Havisham Dome. Pat Arnell, 2002.
Photo by Emily Wolverton.



Miss Havisham Dome (detail).
Desk by John Davenport.
Photo by Emily Wolverton.

her vacant stare is framed by a nest of wiry white hair; she appears crooked on her stool, seated as though she had just collapsed, rumped and broken. Even her finger nails are dirty. Carrington's experience with theater costume design gives him the expertise needed to render such despair on such a fine scale.

Next to Miss Havisham, Arnell placed an exquisite desk by IGMA Fellow, John Davenport. Like Carrington,

Davenport knows the story of his miniature works; how the wood reveals the era, how the joints reveal the method, how the design reveals the artist. Under the spotlight of Miss Havisham's dark universe, Davenport's desk is as trapped as she – a beauty lost in a world without purpose. Like the gold peacock screen behind her, the furnishings in this dome expose the hollow, cold existence of Miss Havisham, an opulence made bare with loneliness. Luster gives way to dust, sparkle becomes glare.

The bleak scene is broken only by the small cat at Miss Havisham's feet, a one-of-a-kind by self-professed cat lady, Sue Veeder. Veeder's felines tell stories, too. In an interview with Mary Kaliski, Veeder tells how she studies both their movement and their stillness. "I studied how they walked, how they sat and stood. You think you know cats from living with them, but you have to really learn every movement... You have to study how they balance."² Although not mentioned in the book, I for one am glad that Pat Arnell gave Miss Havisham a little cat. In the time capsule it will sit



Miss Havisham Dome (detail).
Cat by Sue Veeder. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

forever, playfully pawing at the book on the floor – but it is Miss Havisham who refuses to turn the page.

Literature is nothing less than a gateway for knowledge and imagination. As Dr. Seuss said, "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."³ Making miniatures is yet another way to travel the world using the very same concept – through the appreciation that comes from learning about your subject matter. We hope that this March is filled with some real page-turners.

Emily Wolverton

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*International Guild of Miniature Artisans

1. Kaliski, Mary. "2003 IGMA Fellow in Figures James Carrington." *Miniature Collector*. March 2004. Volume 26, No. 11. Number 174. P. 36.
2. Kaliski, Mary. "Cat Chat with Sue Veeder." *Miniature Collector*. July 2006. Volume 29, No. 3. Number 202. P. 34.
3. Dr. Seuss. *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut!* Harper Collins Children's Books, 1978.



Want to see more miniatures with a literary theme? On your next visit, check out *The Frog Prince Rooms*, *Three Bears' House*, *Alice in Wonderland Maze*, *Gone With the Wind!* *Chestnut Hill Studios*, and *The Wind in the Willows White Caravan!*