

# Minis Magnified

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## CHRISTMAS TO FORGET, OR FIDO BROUGHT SOME FRIENDS HOME & MARY ALICE LET THEM IN

Artist: Pat Arnell

Location: Transitional Hallway

Along with the aromas of traditional foods, the sounds of holiday music, and the return of mittens and scarves, winter brings with it the nostalgia of childhood. The break from school followed by trips to visit family and friends are the perfect starting points for a child's adventure. Although we all have fond memories of a favorite holiday gift or a snowy escapade, everyone can remember at least one winter that they wish they could forget. Alongside burnt birthday cakes and flat bicycle tires there are perhaps no greater disasters in a child's world than those that fall during the winter holidays.



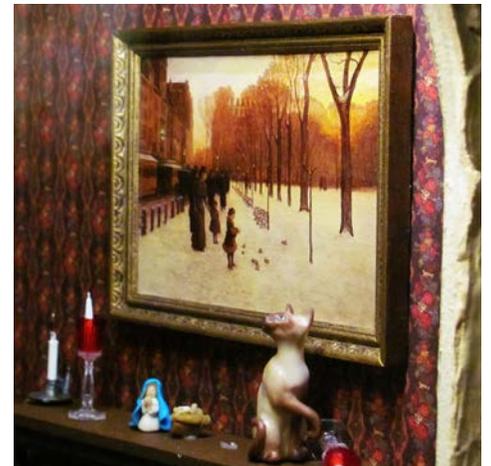
Pat Arnell, our museum's Founder, captured just such an event in her room box titled *Christmas To Forget, or Fido Brought Some Friends Home & Mary Alice Let Them In* (1989). The name really says it all. This is a rowdy moment frozen in time: five dogs and two cats have wreaked havoc on a room decorated for Christmas. Presents are torn open, the tree is toppled to the floor, and the crèche on the mantle is sans Joseph- you'll find him on the floor beside the terrier eating a teddy. The chaos is delightful, with each animal having his or her own spotlight in mischief-making.

What really gives life and charm to the scene, however, is Miss Mary Alice herself. Slumped over in her chair with her frown

firmly in place she is the picture of dejection. Her expression is one with which every child is familiar and one which every adult remembers, all too well: the unavoidable looming punishment. We as the viewers can see what has happened- a little girl has let a crowd of pets into the house and the damage is done. We can also see into the future, and know that once the grown-ups return home, little Mary Alice will find herself in the doghouse (irresistible pun intended).

The structure of the roombox was created from a kit, which was a complimentary gift Pat received in 1989, as an attendee of the South Gulf Miniature Show in Louisiana. The kit was comprised of unfinished wood which could have been transformed into any type of room or shop, but Pat already had a scene taking hold in the back of her mind. "I had this little girl already, and she looked like she was really in trouble," says Pat. "I wanted to make a roombox that centered around something she had done. I already had the tree, so the room took off from there." What she created turned out to be insightful and sympathetic to the trials of childhood, with a helping of tongue-in-cheek humor. The room also features outstanding examples of miniature making: the dogs were made by Gail Morrey, featured in last month's *Minis Magnified*<sup>1</sup>, and the painting above the fireplace is an actual oil reproduction by Paul Saltarelli.

The title of the original painting is *Boston Common at Twilight* (1885-86), by Childe Hassam. Realistic touches from artisans such as these elevate miniature scenes into fine works of art.



*Christmas to Forget* is located in the transitional hallway leading from The Enchanted Realm into Exploring the World Gallery- be sure to stop by and reminisce over your own misadventures!

<sup>1</sup>*Dog's Dinner Party & Dogs Playing Poker*. *Minis Magnified* Wednesday, November 10, 2010. Issue no. 9.