

# Minis Magnified

issue no. 18 Friday, August 12, 2011

## IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS: MINI ARRANGEMENTS BY SANDRA HENRY WALL

Location: Enchanted Realm and Exploring the World Galleries

Just the right touch in a room can really bring all of the separate elements together. Sometimes, this detail might be a rug, or the color of the walls, or even a decorative lamp. More often than not, it's hard to put your finger on just what it is about a space that gives it that *je ne sais quoi*- and miniature artists know this better than most. Creating an appealing miniature room is certainly harder than doing so in the full-scale. For starters, one is limited in resources by what you can make or afford, and even those who can afford the mini masterpieces created by some of the world's most sought-after miniature artisans find themselves restricted by specialty fields and limited availability. Secondly, and most importantly, the details in any room which actually give the space a living presence are not the sort of things one can buy or arrange. Instead, these bits of reality are usually miniscule and hard to place- things such as crumbs on the table, scuffs on the floor and an overall disheveled lived-in ambience that makes a home feel comfortable instead of sterile. A grand undertaking can be undone by misplaced details.

Some miniature artisans have made a career by creating the perfect touches for miniature rooms, whether they be mantle clocks, paintings, leather bound books or brandy sniffers. These specialists know that to create the perfect room, one needs to imagine the personality of the person who would inhabit the space. Home is where the heart is, and a home without heartfelt traces feels vacant and lifeless. Sandra Henry Wall is one of these particular artisans, specializing in floral arrangements and gift baskets in the 1:12 scale, items which truly elevate the rooms in which they are placed. When done correctly, her arrangements do not merely add decoration and beauty- they become a piece of the narrative.

Born and raised on the south side of Chicago, Sandra Henry Wall found her creative niche when she discovered



miniatures as a young parent. After several years of selling out shows and taking on exciting commissions, Wall now primarily focuses on her work as a Guild Fellow with the International Guild of Miniature Artisans, teaching a new generation how to achieve the perfect petals. In the article *Sandra Henry Wall: Certainly Not a Wallflower* by Mary Kaliski, Wall reveals her techniques to be labor-intensive, developed over the years through experimentation and accident.<sup>1</sup> Each one of her flowers are colored by hand. "Some are brushed with pastels, some get water color washes, but everything starts out white.... I might give [it] six or seven color baths," notes Wall.<sup>2</sup> Spending hours at a time perfecting the delicate art of miniature petals may seem intimidating to the average person, but for Wall it's an ideal fit. As she says, "miniatures aren't my job, they are my passion."<sup>3</sup>

To see Wall's arrangements in action, take a trip to our Enchanted Realm gallery and visit Pat Arnell's *Cauldron Coven* (1984-1998), a spooky arrangement over a decade in the making. Look closely in the Frog Room of the Witches House and you'll find one of Wall's beautiful fruit and wine bread baskets. The basket would be a lovely addition to any room, but in this particular amphibian setting it adds an

element of tongue in cheek humor. The room itself is quite literally overrun with little frogs- frogs reading books, playing poker, even little frog painters and hula hoopers. They are hopping and dancing all over the room in little green clusters of energy. Off to the side we see their royal parents, The Frog Prince and his Frog Princess. Dressed to the nines, they are each looking upwards, having spotted a large bug on the ceiling which will no doubt make a tasty snack for whomever is fastest. The basket sits neglected on the back table, still gift wrapped with two wine glasses attached with ribbon. This basket would be the stunning accompaniment for a romantic evening for two, yet there it sits untouched- it has now become the symbol of overworked parents, too busy with children to take time out for themselves. Getting a juicy bug once in awhile will have to do.



To see one of Wall's more traditional floral arrangements, head over to the Exploring the World gallery and take a peek into *The Bridal Boutique* (Betty Ferris, acq. 1989). This is an exquisite example of feminine finery, the rendering of a dream for any bride-to-be. The charms of the little boutique are overflowing: the delicate print of the pillows; the lace of the shimmering gowns; even the buckles and bows on the high heeled shoes seem lovelier in the warm light of the frilly shop. With so many sparkling details, it's hard to decide which place to rest your eyes first. Wall's floral arrangement can be easy to miss at first glance, not because it pales in comparison to the rest of the shop's finery, but because it fits so perfectly that it seems part of the room itself. Brimming with lilies, tulips and roses, the flowers match the décor right down to the color of the walls. If the boutique had been finished without the flowers it would've seemed incomplete, even with the dresses and hats and jewels. The flowers are the finishing touch- you can almost smell them, adding their rich scent to the overall reverie.

So, the next time you take a look around your house try and spot those little touches that make the space your own. You might not even be aware of how deeply your personality is reflected in your furnishings. The real joy comes when you can create a story of yourself through a trip around the room: the shell your daughter found on the beach; the ornament your great-grandmother gave you; the vase you bought on your honeymoon. When it comes to the little details of life, we can all call ourselves artists.

1. Kaliski, Mary. *Sandra Henry Wall: Certainly Not a Wallflower*. *Miniature Collector*, Jan/Feb 1996. Vol. 18, No. 6, Number 93. Pp 30-33.
2. *Ibid.* p. 31
3. *Ibid.* p. 33