



THE HATCHLING APPRENTICE

Pat Arnell, 1998

Location: The Enchanted Realm

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The Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures

Tucson, Arizona

Halloween is almost here, bringing giggling ghouls and merry monsters to town. The crisp chill of fall ushers in the warm glow of anticipation for the winter holidays ahead and, here at The Mini Time Machine Museum, we take a running start, celebrating the month of October with true enthusiasm. Between our spooky décor, haunting visitor guides and chilling flashlight tours, there's a little something for everyone. But perhaps the most wonderful part of Halloween at the museum is in the rediscovery of our fantastical, eerie miniature scenes – giving them a well-deserved spotlight during this spine-tingling time of year.



The Hatchling Apprentice. Pat Arnell, 1998.
Photo by Emily Wolverton.

One such piece is *The Hatchling Apprentice* (1998), a wizard's library created by museum founder, Pat Arnell. Housed within a beautiful glass conservatory made by the remarkable Lady Jane¹, the scene emanates a sense of otherworldly wisdom. The wizard himself sits contentedly on the floor's large rug while overseeing his small menagerie of creatures, gathered around him as though awaiting instruction. Ignoring these lessons is a large dragon who is reading off by himself in the corner, munching away on the wizard's vittles. The scene is calm, in spite of the inevitable squawk and squeak, and altogether inviting to a would-be wizard's apprentice.

As with all of our miniatures, there is more here than meets the eye. The simplicity of the setting belies the noteworthy treasures housed within; many well-known artisans had a hand in this piece. There is a gorgeous wooden table by Jack Chasteen as well as an expertly crafted rabbit cage by dynamic duo Bill Goldsberry and Leona Mathias². Fern Vasi, beloved for her human characters, created the finely robed wizard (be sure to note his rings, a Vasi trademark). There is a cat by Jackie Transue, a little pup by Gail Morey, and a wonderful peacock by bird lady extraordinaire, Maureen Ballantyne. But perhaps the most eye-catching piece in the library is the brightly lit aquarium, made by IGMA³ artisan, Maritta Rucker. You can almost hear the gentle bubbling of the water as the fish listen in on the wizard's tutelage.

There are three pieces in this particular roombox, nevertheless, that stand head and shoulders above the rest. Firstly, although the bulk of the "library" is merely a background image with a smattering of three dimensional objects (a tiny *trompe-l'œil* effect), the conscientious observer will be rewarded to note that one of the books to be found laying about the room is by world-renowned book artisan, Barbara Raheb. An IGMA Fellow with an international following, Raheb is easily one of the most prolific of any miniature book publisher, a self-taught artist whose volumes are aggressively sought-after by miniaturists and bibliophiles, alike. In an interview for *Miniature Collector*, Raheb tells her audience, "I create my little books in the same way that miniature books were created 100-200 years ago...No mechanical process can reproduce the results of traditional book production."⁴ Her piece, *The Book of Mythical Creatures*, can be seen lying open on the wizard's wooden bench, revealing a gorgeous illustration of a griffin. When admiring this tiny tome, take the time to consider that Raheb designed each element of the book herself, including the typography, illustrations, the stitching by hand of the pages, the stretching of the hard-back leather and the embossing on the cover – which is done in 23-karat gold. To make the piece all the more precious, one must note that Raheb ceased production at her Pennyweight Press publishing house in 2002, after more than 27 years of business, due



The Book of Mythical Creatures, Barbara Raheb. *The Hatchling Apprentice* (detail). Pat Arnell, 1998. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

to her age-related macular degeneration.⁵ Many of her limited edition volumes have now appreciated in value by more than 400%. No doubt our wizard is quite pleased to show off this superb piece.

Rivaling Raheb's book in both craftsmanship and artistic integrity is the wizard's

apothecary cabinet by John Davenport, prominently displayed atop the wizard's table. Also an IGMA Fellow, Davenport is quite simply *la crème de la crème* when it comes to period furniture replication in miniature. Davenport is a man who can look at the joints in a cabinet and tell you when it was made; a man who hunts down antique wood at flea markets to capture the aged essence of his artistic goal. Formally trained in antique restoration, his pieces are authentic to every detail- right down to fully functional miniature locks- and replicas of museum furniture are his passion.⁶ This little cabinet is truly beautiful, and yet it is merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to his talents – to see one of his greatest masterpieces, you need stroll no further than our Theater Gallery in the lobby, where his fully furnished miniature *Dutch Baby House* receives gasps of admiration on a daily basis.

Lastly, there is one other item housed within *The Hatchling Apprentice* that must not be overlooked, although the casual observer may easily do so. The top of the wizard's coffee table is not wood nor marble, but rather an actual ammonite fossil, a type of cephalopod



Ammonite Coffee Table, Lyme Regis, England (seen from above). *The Hatchling Apprentice* (detail). Pat Arnell, 1998. Photo by Emily Wolverton.



Apothecary Cabinet, John Davenport. *The Hatchling Apprentice* (detail). Pat Arnell, 1998. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

that went extinct 65.5 million years ago along with the dinosaurs. Pat Arnell purchased this antique table, which has lovely carved wooden legs in the shape of swans, in Lyme Regis, England, when the table itself was already more than 172 years old. Lyme Regis is a town so famous for its rich

ammonite deposits that tourists can quite literally stroll along the beach and pick them up off of the ground. According to the town's tourism website, "Even the lamp posts in Lyme Regis are shaped as ammonites!"⁷ But what really makes the table a wizardly



Wizard, Fern Vasi. *The Hatchling Apprentice* (detail). Pat Arnell, 1998. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

conversation piece is the mythological history of ammonites, themselves: shaped

like coiled snakes without a head, these fossils were called "serpentstones" throughout the medieval ages and were believed to have magical properties. In 1905, Edward Lovett, a member of The Folk-Lore Society and Archaeological Review of England, gave an oral presentation on the superstitions of ammonite found in the North Yorkshire town of Whitby:

Among the most interesting of these superstitions is the snake-ammonite myth of Whitby. The geological formation there is the Lias, and in certain zones of this deposit large numbers of ammonites (of many species), occur. The old idea was that these were petrified snakes, turned into stone by the patron saint of Whitby, Saint Hilda.⁸

Similar superstitions were prominent throughout Europe for centuries- making an ammonite table a remarkably appropriate addition to a wizard's library!

Although you may not have a library of magical manuscripts, or an educated pet dragon, or even a proper wizard's cap, you are always welcome to visit The Mini Time Machine Museum, where you can dive deeply into the realms of imagination and celebrate the limitless fascination of the world through miniatures. Whatever magical mischief you may get into this Halloween, we hope that you find plenty of enchantment – even if it is only pocket-sized.

Emily Wolverton
The Mini Time Machine Museum



Lighted Aquarium, Maritta Rucker. *The Hatchling Apprentice* (detail).
Pat Arnell, 1998. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

1. Linda Young, known professionally as Lady Jane
2. Signed *Bill & Leona* of B & L Miniatures
3. International Guild of Miniature Artisans
4. Bahar, Ann. "Great Books in Miniature: Barbara Raheb Creates Collectible Classics in Dollhouse Scale." *Miniature Collector*. No. 36, 1983. p. 42
5. Pool, Bob. "Tiny Book Publisher is Losing Her Vision." *Los Angeles Times*. August 25, 2002.
6. Bitler, Dougless Strickland. "John Davenport: England's Master Furniture Craftsman." *Miniature Collector Magazine*. July/August 1994. Vol. 17, No. 3, Issue 84. p. 32 – 37.
7. <http://www.lymergis.ukfossils.co.uk/>
8. Lovett, Edward. "The Whitby Snake-Ammonite Myth." *Folk-Lore: A Quarterly Review of Myth, Tradition, Institution & Custom*. The Folk-Lore Society and Archaeological Review and Folk-Lore Journal, Vol. XVI, 1905. p. 333-334.