



RAINBOW HAND

HUSBAND & WIFE DUO BRIAN & KATHY TEPPER

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It is generally agreed upon that most miniature artisans prefer to work independently, being perfectionists by nature who can easily become lost in their own little worlds. Collaboration is often made all the more difficult by the miniscule size of the artwork itself. However, when one does find a partnership among miniaturists, the result is always stunning; after all, two minds are better than one. One such winning combination is the husband and wife duo, Brian and Kathy Tepper, otherwise known by their business moniker, Rainbow Hand. Their fresh and often whimsical takes on wee designer furnishings have taken the miniature world by storm since they began collaborating in 1980, and The Mini Time Machine Museum is proud to house several of their one-of-a-kind designs.



Sioux Beaded War Shirt by Rainbow Hand. Located in *Coyote Trading Post*, Pat Arnell, 1997. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

The Teppers are known for putting out unique lines of furnishings, each one containing all of the accessories one would need to complete a roombox or vignette, from the furniture itself to the pottery on the shelves- even the paintings on the walls match the décor. In her article, “A Bit Bohemian, A Lot Imagination,” Martha Puff writes, “They put together their new pieces in original



Buffalo Sandpainting by Rainbow Hand. Located in *Southwest House Casita Bonita*, Pat Arnell, 1992. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

and compelling ways. With a vision of how the end result will look, the Teppers do not replicate existing items. Rather, they create a ‘feeling’ with which collectors can identify.”¹ These magnificent

designer lines speak to their rich imagination and love for a good challenge, including *The Kaleidoscope Collection*, *Worldly Sea Captain*, *Shell Chic*, and *Extravagant Castle*. These lines are enriched by the odds and ends that the Teppers collect on their treasure hunts, prowling the antique malls for tiny adornments to add to the shelves of their furniture. These unique finds add to the charm of each piece, guaranteeing that no two Tepper pieces are ever alike.

Kathy Tepper, who studied Interior Design in college, is the mastermind behind the fabric and upholstery embellishments, as well as designing much of the furniture itself – often *Bespaq* pieces which have been repurposed – and Brian hand paints each and every one. Brian Tepper, an artist who also paints full-scale, abstract expressionistic oil paintings, creates striking, original miniature paintings to match their designer lines. For example, with the couple’s *Rustic European* line, Brian’s research led him to



Sala-Grey Furniture, painted by Rainbow Hand. Furniture made by Gary Larsen, 1991. Located in *Southwest House Casita Bonita*, Pat Arnell, 1992. Photo by Emily Wolverton.

create exquisite novel pottery pieces and “a whole new line of original oil paintings for the walls, with an emphasis on sailing ships and chickens.”² Their ability to combine their talents and interests, as well as coordinating their sharp eyes for color and pattern, allow them to invent designs that feel unified and whole, not disjointed pieces by two separate artists.

In our *Southwest House Casita Bonita* (Arnell, 1992), located in the Exploring the World Gallery, there are many pieces by Rainbow Hand. As the piece’s name suggests, the southwestern theme of the home calls for many Native American artifacts, of which Brian Tepper is a master craftsman. Puff tells of how Brian “spent his childhood studying American Indian cultures...[carrying] this knowledge into his adult life by doing restoration for museums and teaching Native American customs to children.”³ His attention to historical accuracy combines with his artistic flair, generating pieces distinctively his own. His beautiful sand-painting of a buffalo is on display in the home’s stairwell; downstairs, Gary Larsen’s beautiful dining room set features Rainbow Hand’s gorgeous hand-painted touches. The tall chest in the master bedroom featuring a colorful coyote is also Brian’s work. One of Brian’s artistic couplings in particular, however, stands out as a testament to his gift: *Buffalo Vision*, a limited edition watercolor, is featured beside a matching painted pot of the same name.

Across from *Casita Bonita* is our *Coyote Trading Post* (Arnell, 1997), which reveals Brian Tepper’s knack for recreating authentic miniature artifacts.

Prominently displayed is his *Beaded War Shirt*, a 1/12 scale piece of Sioux attire, complete with hand-painted elements and intricate beadwork. The painted lamp behind the shopkeeper is also his design, a sure fit for any southwestern home. See if you can spot his superb beaded moccasins resting near the fireplace for a real treat!

It isn’t often that a husband and wife are able to share their creative passion in such a rewarding field. Their furnishings have a lived-in, well-loved quality that can only come to pass when two people understand one another’s vision, working together – not simply side-by-side. What better way to ring in this holiday season than with a tribute to such mini marital bliss?

Emily Wolverton
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1. Puff, Martha. “A Bit Bohemian, A Lot Imagination.” *Dollhouse Miniatures*. May/June 2010, Issue 15. P. 6.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. p. 10



Buffalo Vision, limited edition painting, 4/50, Rainbow Hand. Located in *Southwest House Casita Bonita*, Pat Arnell, 1992. Photo by Emily Wolverton.



Buffalo Vision Painted Pot, Rainbow Hand. Located in *Southwest House Casita Bonita*, Pat Arnell, 1992. Photo by Emily Wolverton.



Pirate Cabinet by Rainbow Hand. Currently on sale at The Mini Time Machine Museum Store. Photo by Emily Wolverton.