



REFLECTIONS

Madelyn Cook, circa 1980s

Exploring the World Gallery

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Tucson, Arizona

The New Year is off to a wonderful start here at The Mini Time Machine Museum. We are eager to tackle new program goals, excited to bring new exhibits, and anticipate a joyous spring season in our desert home. The coming of a new year is also a time to reflect on where we have been, pondering our journey with the astute lens of hindsight. The Museum itself caters to rumination, as our name suggests; the march of human progress can be heard throughout our galleries, recreated in three-dimensional still-life portraits of the ages. Art imitates Life, and our dollhouses and roomboxes seize the trappings of culture and innovation like time capsules, conveying entire lifestyles through the appliances, architecture, fashion, food and décor. Miniaturists like Madelyn Cook are historians at heart, rediscovering where we have been and offering up our past like exquisite gift-wrapped parcels – easier to digest in their bite-sized form. In honor of the New Year, we present Cook's *Reflections* (ca. 1980s), which undergoes an annual New Year's Eve transformation during our *Wee Winter Wonderland* festivities. We keep this temporary alteration on par with Madelyn's dedication to accuracy, mimicking the vibrancy of an American New Year's Eve in 1933. While locked in the devastating throws of the Great Depression, this year would mark the first New Year's Eve after the eradication of Prohibition; as the scene suggests, the would-be miniature revelers have been enthusiastically toasting a changing tide.

Reflections is – quite literally – a shining example of Madelyn's work. The roombox is a sleek departure from the all-too-common Victorian lace that has come to typify the preconceived notions of the miniature craft. Made almost entirely from black Lucite and mirrors, this Art Deco suite stands out from the crowd in brazen originality. The Art Deco movement – a celebration of clean lines, symmetry, and the progress of Industry – is resurrected here with a provocative elegance, each pristine surface made beguiling by the light. The material for the carpeting is crushed black velvet, the upholstery is black silk; the atmosphere has the silent depth of



Fiber optic arrangement in *Reflections* (Cook, ca. 1980s). Photo by Emily Wolverton.



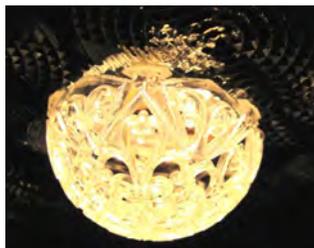
Reflections (Madelyn Cook, ca. 1980s). Exploring the World Gallery. Photo by Amy Haskell.

a cave, fractured by the smart glare of chrome and glass. This strict palette of black, white and silver establishes a tone of wealth almost icy to the touch, broken by minimalistic key notes of red: a bright splash in a Japanese print; the ruby swizzle sticks of the martini tray. Unexpectedly, the coat of one of the Scotties—originally coal black—has faded over the years, appearing now with auburn fur. Although disappointing to Madelyn, I find this display of brash singularity amusing.

In true Madelyn form, the character of our missing tenant is revealed in the shadows. As though reading between the lines, our eyes note the four voluptuous nude statues placed about the room, their feminine curves juxtaposed against the cold gleam of their silvery skin. Adding to this erotic undercurrent is a statue of the Egyptian goddess, Isis, the horns of Hathor rising from her crown; she stands facing the large bubbling hot tub from her vantage on the shelf, the ever-watchful talisman. Animals, too, can be seen in the décor, ambassadors of the natural world breaching the methodical orderliness of this industrial movement. Among them are four statues of cranes, a black swan bed frame, a giraffe towel rack. Even these animals are quietly suggestive, each with their elongated graceful necks. Black-and-white Angelfish peer out from their aquarium, built into the base of the whirling tub – exotic pets with angelic names. Very few plants were permitted in this glossy landscape: icy white Caladium leaves, appearing luminescent in their dramatic, bursting fiber optic displays; and two white bouquets of the sensual, mandorla-shaped blooms of Calla Lily. Madelyn's genius can be seen in details such as these subtle touches. Viewers of her work feel as though they are discovering a baker by following a trail of crumbs.

All of Madelyn Cook's pieces are thoroughly researched, sketched and re-worked. Although grounded in authenticity, each creation is born from her imagination, with a signature

flair that truly sparkles in *Reflections*. The split-level floor plan moves the viewer's eye across the room. Perfectly balancing her straight edges with curves, she lines each step with mirrored tile, casting an ambient glow across the dark floor. Her furnishings are one-of-a-kind, often the result of a surprise twist to an unexpected object: the swan bed's headboard and footboard are repurposed wedding cake toppers; the base of the stylish metal side table was a pastry cutter in another life. The exquisite dome light fixtures are the halved globes of Christmas tree ornaments. Perhaps the most amusing of all are the sensual female statues: collectible figures from the popular game *Dungeons & Dragons*, each was hand-dipped in chrome at a local automobile chrome-plating shop. When Madelyn's cleverness could find no substitute, she created her pieces from scratch – including the sofa and chair with their inlaid mirrored arms and Lucite base, a design inspiration that started the entire endeavor. The frosted windows are her own sand-blasted designs; the petite point rug is also a Madelyn original. With so many shiny surfaces, not to mention two long-haired dogs running about in a black-and-white room, my only hope is that Madelyn also envisioned a full-time miniature housekeeper.



Above, Cook's custom light fixture on a textured black Lucite ceiling. Below, crane statuary. (*Reflections*, ca. 1980s). Photos by Emily Wolverton.



Reflections (Cook, ca. 1980s) decorated as a 1930s American New Year's Celebration for The Mini Time Machine Museum's annual Wee Winter Wonderland. Photo by Amy Haskell.



Left, one of four chrome-plated female nudes. Right, the Scotties next to a martini tray. *Reflections* (Cook, ca. 1980s). Photos by Emily Wolverton.

We hope that Madelyn's *Reflections* reminds you to look back on 2013, like an artist examining his art. Pay attention to the details, explore the paths untaken. If those walls could speak, what would your home reveal about you? We all live in a room of mirrors, seeing ourselves reflected in the choices we make and the people we love. Perhaps 2014 will be the year you break out the polish, and get yourself sparkling like new.

Emily Wolverton
The Mini Time Machine
Museum of Miniatures



Left, Cook's swan bed. Right, Cook's giraffe towel rack. (*Reflections*, ca. 1980s.) Photos by Emily Wolverton.

Don't miss our 2014 Spring Exhibit

Madelyn Cook: A Retrospective

April 1, 2014 — June 1, 2014