

Minis Magnified

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DOG'S DINNER PARTY & DOGS PLAYING POKER

Artist: Gail Morey

Location: The Enchanted Realm

The Holidays are upon us! Colder weather, visiting relatives and recurring opportunities for celebration culminate in this boisterous season of generosity and cheer. Among other things, the next few months bring with them the sights, smells and flavors of family feasting. The image of family and friends gathered together enjoying traditional foods and sharing memories is universal to all cultures, symbolic of love that spans the generations.



It is in part this familiarity which makes *Dog's Dinner Party* by Gail Morey (cir. 1990) so utterly delightful. In this miniature world the dog has his day, anthropomorphized into upright gentlemen and well-dressed ladies. The dogs are a mixed bunch of breeds, assembled around the dining room table for an elegant affair. Note the attention to exquisite detail, from the red velvet wallpaper to the crystal chandelier, to the family portraits on the walls, the china patterns and the gorgeous rug beneath their paws. The dogs are listening attentively to their host, who appears ready to give a celebratory toast to his guests. Morey shows us her sense of humor, as well- giving her fine canines a cat for a maid.

Gail Morey currently resides in New York, and is a Fellow of the International Guild of Miniature Artisans, as well as a member of the NAME Academy of Honor. She is best known for hand-sculpted and painted dogs, in both the 1" and ½" scale. She is renowned for her dedication to breed authenticity, and a certificate accompanies most of her work, signing each piece with her name, the year and the piece's number in the series.¹ Morey is a self-taught artist, whose love of miniatures inspired what has become her life's work:

To my amazement I discovered I could actually make these tiny little pieces and was having fun doing it. The experience working with the clay improved my ability to sculpt my very first dog. The interest and enthusiasm of the collector for my canine crowd was quite gratifying. It was 1980 when I decided to branch out and sculpt pedigree dogs as a full-time pursuit.²

The realism of her dogs makes them highly collectible. Their faces reveal the innocence and playful nature which make a dog man's best friend. According to Marge Hart, co-owner and operator of Harts Desires Minis, "A Gail Morey dog is a treasure most any collector would be proud to own, whether you are a dog lover or not. They just add life to your settings."³

Much of her more notable work is themed along similar lines to that of *Dogs Dinner Party*- where dogs behave like humans in real-world situations. The innate charm of these scenes is due in part to the famous series of sixteen oil paintings by C. M. Coolidge, which were commissioned by Brown & Bigelow in 1903. These paintings feature dogs playing poker, and were created to advertise the company's cigars. They have become iconic in American culture, and Gail Morey knows it. Pat Arnell acquired Morey's version, *Dogs Playing Poker* (cir. 1990) in 1993.

Many could argue that a home just isn't a home without the wagging tail of a loyal pet, and Morey's sculptures add a furry sparkle to many of the miniature houses here at The Mini Time Machine Museum. See how many four-legged friends you can spot on your next trip to the museum- and don't forget to slip something tasty under the table to Fido, this holiday season.



1. Frank, Lee and Alice Frank. *A Reference Guide to Miniature Makers Marks*. 1996. p. 297

2. Ibid.

3. Hartsdesireminis.com. Copyright © 2010 Harts Desires Minis. Design by Anne Gerdes Web Design.