

Why Miniatures: Embracing Change With Ingenuity

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The Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures

Tucson, Arizona

Change in so many aspects of our lives is accelerating dramatically. It seems that the routines and models in our heads that we rely upon to guide everyday behavior don't serve us as well as they used to. Life just seems to race on, and our comfortable assumptions of regularity and repetition don't prepare us well for the variety of technical innovations that are making change all around us.

Since so much of what we do routinely happens in that state we sometimes refer to as "autopilot", we can be quite surprised by reality as we face activities and the increasingly technical complexities that comprise our daily lives. When things happen faster, in greater numbers and with greater complexity, ingenuity is a very important aspect of our own adaptability to change.

A wonderful example of the human capacity for finding solutions to rapid and unpredictable change is the biblical story of Noah and his ark. In the story, Noah faces a frightening scenario of the destruction of the world and uses ingenuity to devise a plan to save his family and all the families of earth's animal kingdom by building an ark to shelter them from a cataclysmic storm.

Simply stated, ingenuity is generating good ideas for solutions to problems and putting those ideas into practice. Many of us approach miniatures as a test of our ingenuity by re-purposing objects and devising new ways and new materials to replicate the precious details of our favorite masterworks of art, architecture and antiquity.



Noah's Ark (1994). Millwood Toy Co.
Photo by Emily Wolverton.

Some of us engage in scenario planning by designing miniatures that allow us to imagine how the future will unfold, using ingenuity and sometimes unfamiliar materials to shape our miniature world to anticipate the next great wave of change or innovation. I've read that we tend to imagine the future without accounting for the high rate of change that we are experiencing every day. Will we ever catch up? Probably not, since we live in the current moment and can only perceive time as we rush along with it. Yet the "Time Machine" experience that miniatures provide is a great way to hone our cognitive skills while embracing change.

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The Mini Time Machine Museum