

PIN-UP

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25

Catalogues of Desire

Adam Charlap Hyman on the Power of Miniatures

I think my obsession with room miniatures began when I was eight. I had come across photographs in an old *National Geographic* from the 1980s showing a series of remarkable interiors. There was a library filled with tiny books — each one only big enough to contain the first lines of famous English poems and novels — hand-written in ink by their authors across many small pages. A cellar was stocked with glass bottles filled with wine from the finest vineyards — all labeled and each scarcely an inch tall — sealed with pieces of cork that could only have been inserted with the most delicate of tweezers. In the bedroom, the walls were hung with luxurious blue damask, matching material was suspended from the bed's canopy — material which, though probably lighter than a piece of tissue and about the same size, pooled on the floor realistically as though it consisted of yard upon yard of heavy silk. I was mesmerized, and pined away for the visit I would eventually make several years later to see this house — Queen Mary's Dolls' House, as it

happens, designed by the architect Edwin Lutyens in the early 1920s at 1:12 scale. Our pilgrimage to English miniature worlds also took in Titania's Palace, Sir Nevile Wilkinson's traveling attraction which was conceived and built between 1907 and 1922 to raise funds for children's charities. Its inspiration lay with Sir Nevile's daughter, Guendolen, who at age three fancied she'd seen a fairy disappear beneath a sycamore tree. To accompany his miniature marvel, Sir Nevile published *Titania's Palace: An Illustrated Handbook*, whose frontispiece consisted in a photo with the caption "The Architect-in-Chief and her Iridescence" — Sir Nevile himself with a ghostly little fairy perched on his shoulder. To us, now, the image appears goofy and handmade, but somehow the disconnect between representation, reality, and scale was confused. The process by which one's mind accepts that something is not real and chooses to engage with it seems to me an essential part of making both miniature and full-size architecture. As a kid playing with my own doll-less house, I spent

hours arranging elaborate catastrophic tableaux in the kitchen with icing splatter all around the room, shattered porcelain plates, spilled sauces, and grotesque Sculpey meals. I believe my subsequent delight in running around to the façade of the house and peering in at these scenes through the window tapped into something universal: a suspension of disbelief that is so thrilling and pure. Today I feel the same awe when I adjust my vantage point to meet the windows of models that my business partner Andre and I build, and see the spaces inside come to life as the light filters through the openings. In the end, on that first trip trekking around England in search of miniature follies renowned for their exquisite and almost uncanny precision, it was the instances where the illusion was fractured that affected me most deeply. We saw the oversized textiles and clumsily rendered china of 17th-century Dutch cabinet houses, which, in all their muddled scale, were made by merchant families to document an ideal of domestic life. We visited Denton Welch's amateur restoration of a

dollhouse rescued from a wartime basement, a diversion from writing and his general sense of not belonging. We ended with the miniature Magritte and ham-fisted upholstery of Salvador Dalí's lip sofa in Vivien Greene's Toll House — in the 1980s, Graham Greene's wife, who was an expert on dollhouses, created a shadow-box tribute to her memories of Edward James's by-then-destroyed Surrealist interiors at West Dean. Each one we saw was a catalogue of desire, their diminutive scale impossibly weighted with longing, loss, and memory.

The interior designer Adam Charlap Hyman is one half of Charlap Hyman & Herrero, an architecture and design firm he founded with architect Andre Herrero. The following pages display research material Charlap Hyman amassed throughout his life on the subject of miniature interiors and dollhouses. They served as inspiration for Charlap Hyman's design for *Blow Up*, an exhibition curated by Felix Burrichter for Friedman Benda gallery in New York which will open in January 2019.

All images from the personal archives of Adam Charlap Hyman.

A page from "Royal House for Dolls," *National Geographic* (November 1980).



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The slide-out garden with its pop-up trees invites a stroll on velvet turf (below). Yet this is not the time for rustivating idleness. A formal dinner is about to be served. The walnut dining table (below right) is set with the silver service, rather than the simpler



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Right: Image of miniature books in shelf from "The Master of Minuscule," *Traditional Home* (July 2001). Left: *Mae West Lips Sofa* miniature from the dollhouse of Edward James (n.d.). Background: Page from "Royal House for Dolls," *National Geographic* (November 1980).

Foreground: Man inside dollhouse. Image from the personal archives of Adam Charlap Hyman. Background: A page from "Small Wonders," *Traditional Home* (July 2001).





Background: Page from "Royal House for Dolls", National Geographic (November 1980). Clockwise from top right: Still from Ingmar Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* (1983). Image from "Royal House for Dolls", National Geographic (November 1980). The playhouses of Olga, Alexandra, and Maria, daughters of Nicolai I, at the winter palace in St. Petersburg, depicted by a court painter (c. 1850).

Clockwise from top left: Denton Welch with his dollhouse, from *The Paris Review* (July 16, 2010). The Denton Welch dolls' house, England (1783) © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. René Magritte, *Les valeurs personnelles* (Personal Values) (1952). Background: Page from *Architectural Digest* (c. 1980).



...ches, is set with silver appointments. Even the tiny fruit
les, later King Edward VIII, by A. J. Munnings. Above the
Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and their children. The
y room is the Salon, serving also as a throne room. The
Sophia, an ancestress of Queen Mary, by Sir A. S. Cope.
Queen Mary in their coronation robes, by Sir William
hough small fingers indeed would be needed to play it.



Left: Dominique de Menil with the gallery model for Max Ernst, *Inside the Sight* (1973). Rice Museum. Right: image from *Architectural Digest* (c. 1980). Background: Page from "Royal House of Dolls," *National Geographic* (November 1980).

Top: image from "Small Wonders," *Traditional Home* (July 2001). Bottom: image from Stephanie Finegan, *The Dollhouse Book* (1999). Background: "Queen Mary's Dolls' House," *Architectural Digest* (c. 1980).

Queen Mary's Dolls' House

A Lilliputian Fantasy



Perhaps the most elaborate
conceived in 1920, and
Portland stone, has classically
electrically, the exterior
handwritten by authors

IT IS LONDON, in 1920. The
Sir Edwin Lutyens, Prince
Louise and others are around
ner table, talking about the
way of life they have known
rapidly things have been
since the end of World War
age is surely passing. Some
marks that there ought to be
captured that age before it
forever—a way to illustrate

