Miniature art

Miniature art is a specialty fine art form considered through the ages as extremely detailed, outstanding in color and strength of composition, no more than 1/6th scale of the actual subject. With its little space requirements and somewhat favorable cost comparisons, this art form places fine art within the reach of art lovers and collectors.

Fascination with creating small-scale art is evidenced in many civilizations. Ancient Greeks adorned walls with small murals and engraved portraits on coins and rings. Monks in the Middle Ages illuminated manuscript pages with delicate illustrations bordered with red lead pigment called minimum, which evolved to miniature. Elizabethan England favored miniature portraits on vellum and later, ivory. Those miniatures were easily carried in a pocket or locket and valued much as the small photographs we carry today.

Colonization brought the miniature to American shores and the influences of the New World. Despite the advent of photography in the mid-nineteenth century, the love of creating small art remained. The early years of the twentieth century witnessed a revival period of interest in miniatures.

MASF, the Miniature Art Society of Florida, is one of a number of non-profit groups in the Unites States promoting contemporary miniaturism. Founded in 1974 in Clearwater by artist and teacher Bede Zel Angie, MASF has grown to nearly 400 members in the United States and several foreign countries. Now headquartered in Dunedin, it has brought Florida to the forefront in the resurgence of interest in miniature art.

An article in the latest “Color Pencil” magazine notes the increase of interest in miniatures in the late 1990s, generated by Artist Trading Cards (ATC) introduced by Swiss artist M. Vanci Stirnemann. Original art was created on cards at a standard size of 2.5 by 3.5 inches and traded between artists like baseball cards. The small works gained popularity among both artists and collectors.

MASF’s 52nd Annual International Miniature Art Exhibit, the world’s largest miniature exhibit, will be held from January 17-February 14, 2027, in the Dunedin Fine Arts Center, Dunedin, Florida. There are usually between 400-600 entries as part of the exhibit, with magnifying glasses mounted every few feet so the miniatures can be fully examined and appreciated. Monetary prizes are awarded to the judges’ favorites and sales are possible. This exhibit awes and inspires everyone who attends.

As colored pencil artists, I urge you to take up the challenge of miniature art and enter the 2027 exhibit. The size of miniature art is limited to 25 square inches, which translates to 4x6, and anything smaller. If you don’t believe you can produce a miniature, don’t doubt yourself. You

never know until you try. I submitted two entries in 2024, one of which, "Joy", was accepted, and it was a thrill to see my work on the wall.

I invite you to explore the possibility of adding miniature art to your artistry. Membership in MASF is $25 annually, but you need not be a member to submit entries. The deadline for submissions is between August 15 and September 26, 2026. Please find information about the exhibit and requirements for entry at: www.miniature-art.com; and Miniature Art Society of Florida, Inc.