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(P.1)

## Miniature mania

# Hobbyists live happily in a tiny, beautiful world

By Corinne Abalt  
staff writer

**T**HE GUY on TV who liked the razor so much he bought the company has nothing on Clarissa Goad of Birmingham.

She dropped into the Miniature Makers' Workshop of Royal Oak last December for an \$8.40 gift and bought the store.

"I had been looking for a store for four years," said Goad, who took over as owner/proprietor in January.

As soon as she learned former owner Barbara Blauman wanted to sell before the end of the year, Goad was ready to deal. She and her husband, Tom, were just about to leave for California, so she left her lawyer with power of attorney.

From a phone booth along a California highway, she learned the business was hers.

Goad, who said her primary interest is jewelry making, brings a wealth of volunteer experience to this endeavor. She has headed successful fund-raising campaigns for several organizations including the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association, has been active in New Horizons and the Bargain Box, a Junior League fund-raiser, based in Birmingham.

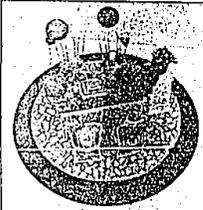
**THE FINANCIAL** aspect of these projects has always been her particular interest, so when she says, "I always wanted the experience of owning my own business," her quick decision makes sense.

Miniatures and miniature making, which go back to ancient history, have grown to one of the foremost leisure-time activities in the country. For many people, they constitute a full-time business, not only for the workshop teachers and shop owners, but for those who supply fine miniature pieces to what has become an almost insatiable market.

When she attended her first trade show in New York with Blauman in January, Goad quickly saw the potential for exquisitely crafted miniature furnishings and accessories.

**"This could benefit the local art community. There's a huge market in the miniature world for hand-crafted things . . ."**

— Clarissa Goad



The Snoopy theme birthday party was made by Hiroko Ohba of Farmington Hills in a green and white color scheme.

"My ultimate goal," she said, "is to get the artists from all over Michigan to make collectible miniature things."

And lest miniatures be regarded lightly in terms of either price or quality, it should be mentioned that these works, made in the scale of either one-half inch to one foot or one inch to one foot, are often as expensive as their full size counterparts.

A SINGLE pair of custom made Victorian style drapes by Judge Williamson of Clinton is \$125. Williamson, who gives workshops at Miniature Makers' in Royal Oak, makes beautifully styled and upholstered furniture as well as many other custom pieces. He is considered one of the outstanding artists in the field.

The price tag of each chair in a set of laser-carved and canned high back, period chairs is \$370. Others run much higher.

Almost all of the things found in homes — from modest to elegant — are available in miniature — sterling silver, china, paintings, sculpture, fine china, linens, tools, pots and pans, even aquariums.

An aquarium, full of fish, was recently made for Miniature Makers' by Hiroko Ohba of Farmington Hills. She dropped by the shop because she wanted to make American holiday scenes to take back to Japan to help explain our customs. She now produces many choice settings as a business and also teaches a class in miniature making for Japanese-speaking craftsmen.

BOB SUTTON of Rochester specializes in making tools and tool benches. All his tools work, even the pliers, wrenches and saws.

David Brennan of Pleasant Ridge is a coppersmith who produces a



Clarissa Goad holds a figure and period bed frame made by Judy Shellhouse, a Michigan miniature artist who gives workshops at the Miniature Makers.

sparkling array of copper pans and tea kettles. Judy Shellhouse, another recognized Michigan miniature maker, creates period furniture, such as four poster beds, carved tables and carved fireplaces. She also gives workshops at the Royal Oak store.

Goad said she'd like to find a glass artist in this area to do contemporary glass. One New York State artist is doing hand blown glass, but no one to Goad's knowledge is doing contemporary.

"She wants to encourage some of this area's fine silversmiths to do some custom pieces and is looking for a stained glass artist to fill the requests for stained glass windows."

"This could benefit the local art community," she said. "There's a huge market in the miniature world for hand-crafted things . . . that's why I think we're different (from other miniature stores), we have handcrafted things and classes."

"We are hoping to do a special

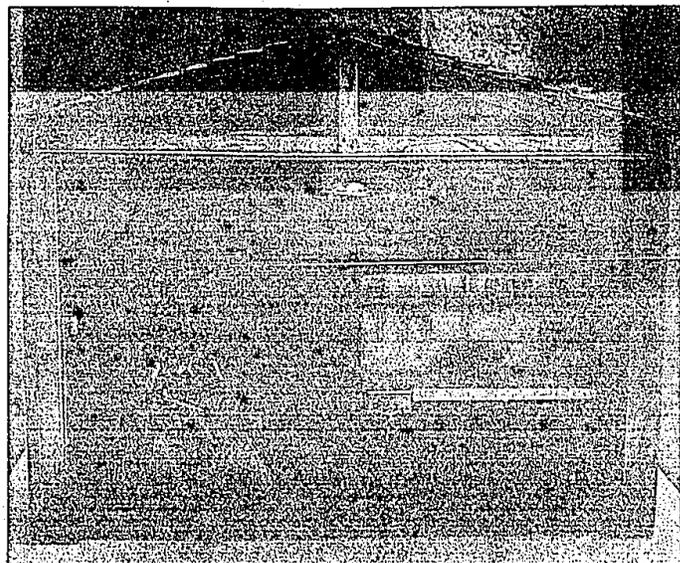
Staff photos by Mindy Saunders

edition of Hunter House (the home of Birmingham's founding family) in half-inch scale through the workshops."

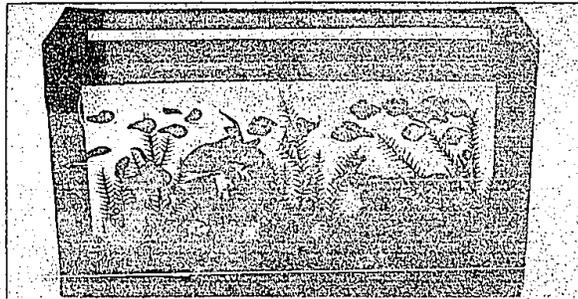
Goad's son, Ted, 23, a graduate in graphic design from Western Michigan University, makes some of the doll houses and basic boxes which are used for the single scene vignettes. This, said his mother, has

helped him build his own business. While becoming acquainted with the miniature business on both the local and national level, Goad says readily, "I love it."

Classes, buying trips, trade shows, seminars and workshops will all start again in September and she'll be ready with a challenging class schedule and a lot of energy.



Tools and tool bench are the work of Rochester miniature artist, Bob Sutton. All of the tools actually work.



The aquarium (above), complete with fish and plants, comes with water that looks like it ought to bubble, flow and drip — but that's a delightful illusion. It was made by Hiroko Ohba of Farmington Hills. The upholstered furniture in the room (at left) is by Judge Williamson, the table by Judy Shellhouse and the rug by Nancy Knoch, who works at the Miniature Makers.

