

Creative Living

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Miniaturist carves Adams Collection

By Corinne Brooks
special writer

The newest creation in the miniature world is a three-piece set of oriental furniture called "The Adams Collection." But the story began many years ago in the lives of three women who make the miniatures possible.

Hortense Adams, a Birmingham resident, owns the antique Chinese furnishings that are miniaturized. Her daughter, Clarissa Goad, is owner of Miniature Makers' Workshop where the collection is reproduced and sold.

Judy Shellhaas of Plymouth is the extraordinarily talented wood carver commissioned by Goad to carve the replicas. It was destined that the experience and interests of these three people one day would meld to create a new product for miniature collectors.

The home of Hortense Adams is filled with family treasures from China. Purchased shortly after the turn of the century by Goad's grandfather, Henry Carr Adams, each item of furniture was carefully selected by Goad's grandmother to bring back to Michigan.

HENRY CARR Adams was a professor of economics at the University of Michigan. He had been head of his department for 40 years when he was asked by the United States government in 1912 to go to China as a consulting accountant on railroads.

"Railroads were in a terrible mess in China back then," Mrs. Adams said. "Some were owned by Germany, France, England, and Russia, and they needed a neutral person to come in and try to figure out what to do."

Henry Carr Adams earned so much respect from the Chinese that they sent an envoy to Michigan to place a memorial on his grave when he died in 1922. Thomas Adams, Hortense Adams' husband and Clarissa Goad's father, was only 12 years old when the family went to China to live. Today, their home is a showplace for unique oriental cabinets, teakwood tables and chairs, a pair of chests, various sized stools, a Ming vase, a folding screen, porcelain lamps and plates, old brass incense burners, buddhas and horse stirrups, all from the Far East.



The intricately hand-carved teakwood miniatures of "The Adams Collection" are the work of miniature artist, Judy Shellhaas of Plymouth.

When Clarissa Adams Goad was a little girl, her father gave her a doll house. It was a replica of her home where her mother still lives.

Goad's love for that doll house, not now in her possession, may have set the course of her destiny when she went shopping in Royal Oak last Christmas season at the Miniature Makers' Workshop — and ended up buying the store.

GOAD WAS 3 years old when her parents built and moved into their Birmingham farmhouse in 1935. Family history and her mother's antique Chinese furnishings continue to influence her business sense.

The Adams Collection, recently announced, is a three-piece set of two intricately handcarved basswood walnut-finished armchairs priced at \$320 each. The D-shape matching console table is \$430. Priced for connoisseurs, the set is first in a series of miniature antique Chinese furniture to be offered to collectors.

Judy Shellhaas of Plymouth is a well-known artisan and teacher of miniature wood carving. Shellhaas and

Goad are miniature soulmates and seem to be made for each other in the business.

Like Goad, Shellhaas was influenced by childhood memories of furnishings in her grandmother's house. Also similar to Goad's early dollhouse love, there was a miniature house that Shellhaas loved and lost.

In high school Shellhaas, who was interested in architecture, built a one-inch-scale house that was four feet long. It took her six months to make. When her parents' home was destroyed by fire, all was lost, including her miniature house.

Later in life Shellhaas studied interior design, but seeing a doll house in a toy store one day excited her into trying tiny furniture making and a new career began.

At first, Shellhaas made Colonial miniature furniture, then switched to carving Victorian miniatures copied from inherited family heirlooms and historic settings. She wields an X-acto knife with the skill of a brain surgeon to carve the elaborate flowers, fish and swirls of the oriental motif into the



MINDY BAUNDERS/staff photographer

Hortense Adams stands between two of the heirloom pieces of Chinese furniture, which have been reproduced in miniature for "The Adams

Collection." They were brought from China by her father-in-law, Henry Carr Adams.

framework of the Chinese Adams Collection.

A LIFELONG resident of Birmingham, Goad is an accomplished jeweler and metalsmith. She wants to encourage artists to work in miniature. She says anyone who paints, sculpts, sews, blows glass or works with metal can also work in miniature.

On the national scale, "It's a \$300 million business," Goad said. "There is a huge market for handcrafted miniature things. It is the largest adult col-

lective hobby in the United States."

Miniature making is an ancient art once used by pharaohs so that replicas of their possessions could be interred with them in their tombs.

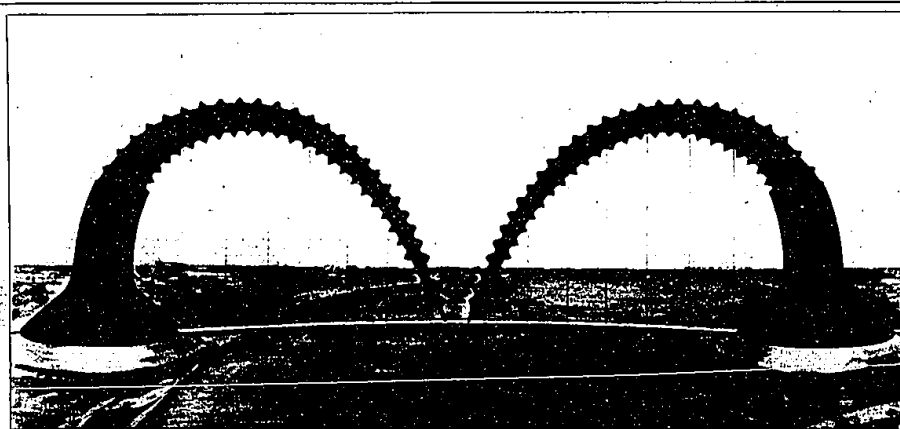
Today a growing market for miniatures has turned the art into big business.

Architects and real estate developers use miniature models as sales and planning tools; the advertising industry uses miniatures for photographic purposes and television commercials; museums devote whole wings of their buildings to miniatures depicting his-

torical events and settings; and theatrical producers use them for stage models.

When new pieces are added to the Adams Collection each year, it will total 24 pieces, Goad said. Only one dozen new sets will be produced so that only 15 people can own the collection.

The Adams Collection is advertised nationally in miniature collectors magazines. For a mere \$1,070, the first in the series can be purchased at 1725 W. 14 Mile in Royal Oak, where the Miniature Makers Workshop continues its big little business.



The etching, "Double Screwarch Bridge," State III by Claes Oldenburg is one of three variations on the same theme by the same artist that are in the exhibition. Each of the three images is about 24

by 51 inches. Oldenburg used the classical approach for these works. The one pictured is etching and aquatint with monotype. The others are etching, and etching and aquatint.

American prints — a survey

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

The exhibit "20th Century American Printmakers" on display at Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum through Jan. 26 says a lot about American art in general.

The prints by 31 artists date from 1905 ("Connoisseurs of Prints," John Sloan) to 1983 ("Voice II," Jasper Johns). The show, well hung and easy to follow, is enjoyable as well as informative.

For one thing, many names more often associated with paintings are represented here — Thomas Hart Ben-

ton, Milton Avery, George Bellows, Edward Hopper and Helen Frankenthaler.

In the first part of the show, most of the artists were concerned with documenting life around them. A lot of them, such as Peggy Bacon and Reginald Marsh, worked as illustrators, and their prints with urban scenes and subjects artfully chosen and rendered, reflect their flair for documentation.

Hopper, represented by three etchings, never veers from the gentle, lonely beauty that fills so many of his paintings. He doesn't document, he creates mood.

Literary documentation diminished as other artists regarded printmaking techniques as a pure art form to be ex-

ploded and expanded. Figures become little more than elements in the larger design as the print techniques become more sophisticated.

SOME MAY find it important to ask themselves if the absence of the figure in later prints had anything to do with detached objectivity of the 50s and 60s, or if, at some point, studio photographers, photojournalists and TV cameramen were sating appetite for figures.

Sure Andy Warhol was using faces such as Marilyn Monroe, but it was the cookie cutter repetition of the famous face rather than the sensitive approach which caught the public's fancy. Among the exciting modern ones are

three related works by Claes Oldenburg "Double Screwarch Bridge, State I," State II and State III. The first is an etching, the second an etching and aquatint and the third an etching with aquatint and monotype.

"Oriental Restaurant" by Richard Estes incorporates the same type of detailed photo realism that is found in his paintings. Frank Stella's 66 by 61 inch "Talladega Three II" filled with color and luminescence that gives it the quality of a stained glass window.

The elements of design are all important in Roy Lichtenstein's "The Reclining Nude," and she has those in abundance.



"Coney Island (Luna Park)," 1929, a lithograph by Louis Lozowick, is one of four by him in the exhibit. This one, departing from the traditional picture of life, presents vignettes which suggest the flurry of activity. The image is almost 13 by 9 inches.

The exhibition is made up of selections from the permanent collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

The museum is open 1-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 550 Lone Pine, Bloomfield Hills.