

Recycled into Miniatures III

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Once again, these ideas are generally meant for 1" scale.

I hope you have been encouraged by some of my little mini ideas in previous Gazettes. I have been involved with miniatures for 40 years on and off. Happily, I now belong to a miniature club and often visit a mini shop nearby, and sharing with other happy enthusiasts, I have learned many helpful hints. It's amazing that when I share a hint with someone that I assume is obvious, that they may never have heard or thought of it before. Like this one:

• Samples •

You know those little plastic "sleeves" you can purchase for your wallet to hold photos? Well, here is what you use it for. Select one envelope for each room of your dollhouse and put a sample of your wallpaper and flooring in it. Perhaps a piece of curtain or drapery fabric too. Carry it with you as you would treasured photos of loved ones. But this is for your loved house! If you're at a fabric or thrift store and see a small print that could be used for pillows or accents, you can easily see a

swatch of wallpaper, fabric or flooring to contrast with or match it. If it works, then carry a sample of that too.

• Displaying •

A dilemma I've had is how to adequately display a real miniature quilt. Years ago a wonderful friend made a lovely little quilt and gave it to me. I was doubly blessed when another friend crocheted me a miniature afghan with ordinary sewing thread! Of course you want to display the whole thing. But if you try to dress a bed with them, they may not lay flat or tucking them under the mattress may hide some of what you are trying to show. So I discovered a couple of options which will look cute:

The first is to hang it on a clothesline "to dry" in a mini laundry area. Put a few stitches in the back on the line where it doesn't show and to make a "clothespin", sew a few heavy French Knots at the tippy top and then a thick vertical stitch to look like the old clothespins that were simply placed down over the top of a garment or bed sheet on the clothesline.

The second idea is to lay the quilt or afghan on the floor, perhaps in a nursery or within the watchful eye of a parent or nurse in another room. Then lay a (naked?) baby with its arms propped up a bit, on its stomach and place a teddy bear in front of it. I happen to have a teddy bear who also lays on its stomach with its front arms propped up. It looks as if they are staring into each other's eyes! Too darling! Perhaps a scattering of toys would add a bit of interest too.

• Sandpaper •

Let's talk about sandpaper. Try collecting several thicknesses of dowel at least 4-6" long. I tried to just fold sandpaper over and sand the inside of a gutter but it maladjusted itself. The answer? Quickly resort to rolling it around a round piece of dowel, then sand away! In an emergency, you might wrap the paper around a thin paintbrush handle.

Go easy on the sanding! It's way too easy to sand too much too quickly. So take it easy and do just a bit at a time.

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You can always sand a tad more if needed, but if you take off too much, you can't "unsand" it. Also, add a good emery board to your toolbox. One side is coarse with a lot of grit. The other side is smoother for fine-tuning your project. And of course, wrap sandpaper around a rectangular or square length of wood to get into tight straight edges.

• Ceiling Lights •

What about installing or replacing ceiling lights? Have you ever thought of using a removable carpet on the floor ABOVE your light fixture? Or not gluing down a couple of pieces of "hardwood" flooring, leaving them loose so you can replace bulbs on the floor "above" the light being replaced? This is only for doing it the old-fashioned way. Now we have wonderful, removable, replaceable LED lights, thank goodness! Unscrew the old and put in a new LED light. And place your burned out bulb on the top of your mini trash can. If only Thomas Edison and friends could come back for a day and see what we've done with miniature lighting!

• Carpet •

In helping a friend put down some dollhouse carpeting, we found out that the tape wiring and any actual wires, be they ever so slender, showed thru the light-colored carpet. So we affixed the rug onto another piece of paper (or cardstock) and then placed it in the room. Ta-da – problem solved. It's also sometimes easier to install wall paper if is first affixed to another piece of paper. Plus it too helps to cover up any actual wiring on the wall.

• Molding •

Oh my word!!! My biggest hint ever is to paint your moldings BEFORE you glue them on the siding! I am helping a friend to paint such a miracle. She got it already completely assembled. We have used several rolls of blue painters' tape from the Dollar Store to keep color #1 off of color #2 and then more to keep color #2 off color #1!! Make your

house and paint or stucco your sidings or choose your surface FIRST!!! THEN paint your moldings! THEN glue them on! It will save you thousands of gray hairs even if you're only 21!

This also works for flooring. If you decide to paint or varnish a floor, do so BEFORE you put your baseboard moldings on! If you suddenly get the yen to varnish afterwards, then go for the painter's tape.

• Stucco •

Speaking of stucco, I once purchased a gallon of texturized paint and used some, to roll onto my siding with a four-inch felt-covered-type roller. It covers a multitude of seams and cracks. Then you can paint over it or leave it plain to get the look of plain stucco. Happy siding!

• Glue •

This isn't a recycling idea, but can save you a lot of money, time and angry effort. Does your glue cap, especially super-type glues, glue itself on so you can't get it off? You can't imagine the time I had when I tried to twist the lid off of a superglue tube and the lid wouldn't budge, but the whole tube tore in half!!! Try to put a bit of Vaseline or lotion around the tip and gently screw the lid on back and forth a couple of times to spread it evenly inside the cap. Remember – "Just a little dab'll do you".

• Pillows •

A good way to make a decorative pillow, for a couch, chair or bed to set realistically, is to partially fill it with sand and then sew a stitch or French Knot in the middle of it. Then you can poke and prod it into the shape you want and the sand will hold it down nicely.

• Lights •

An amazing artisan suggested that if you have two or more light fixtures behind each other, stagger them a bit so you don't just look in and see a huge "clump" of lights.

• Hole Punch •

Have you ever taken a hole puncher and tried to punch out a tiny label or

picture to attach to a perfume bottle, jar or small object? I tried to do that and the "label" got all messed up by the punch. Try holding it onto a piece of card stock and then punch out your tiny picture/label. It won't come out all catawampus.

• Drawer Knobs •

Has one of your miniscule drawer knobs ever fallen off? I found if I took a pointed toothpick and put a dab of white fast-drying Tacky glue in the hole, and then shoved the tiny end in, it would save a lot of messy hassle, rather than using a clear tube-type glue that wants to spew a wide, messy dot. If you try to lift it up to reposition it and clean up the ooze, then you get clear hairs of glue that stick to everything but your hole. Once that glue gets on a varnished surface, it's nigh unto impossible to get it off. The Tacky for me, is much easier to control. And can be quickly wiped off of shiny surfaces.

• Period House •

I had a miniature shop in the late 1970s. A lady, making a Victorian house, came in often to show me her latest miniature. One day she brought in the cutest little radio, I think Renwal. I said, "You can't put that in your house." "Just exactly why not?" she demanded. "Well, uh...it hasn't been invented yet!" If you're going to make a period house, then stay within the parameters of that period.

• Dream House •

When I get to make my Dream House, I plan to call it Generation House. It will look like my grandmother grew up in it, then my mom, then me, then my children and grandchildren. You can put anything in it from a spinning wheel to a microwave.

• Bananas •

My last hint is to remove each green banana from the bunch so they won't squish when you try to pull off a ripened one. Why do I share this? Because I have gone bananas learning and sharing all these hints I've discovered.