



SUMMER 2011

## Small but Splendid: A Miniature Room

Eugene J. Kupjack

*Entrance Hall in a Southern Plantation, 1780-1810*



Come right on in—if you can fit! The grand staircase is elegant, but each stair is only about the size of your thumb. The sparkling silver soup tureens are impressive, but they can only hold a few drops of soup. The coffee cups set out on the mahogany tables are hardly larger than your fingernail. What's more, standing up in this room will be difficult. As you look down on the four columns, you realize that they don't even reach your knees. What kind of place is this?

This is a miniature room, about 1 foot tall and 3 feet wide. Even though the whole room is tiny, it looks very convincing—as if you could walk right in. This is because everything in the room is built to the same scale. The hunting horn lying on top of the stool appears to be about 1 inch long. Since a real hunting horn is about 1 foot long, we can say that for this particular horn, the scale is 1 inch=12 inches (1 foot). We can also say that the scale is “one to twelve” or we can write it as “1:12.” Every part of the room (columns, doors, windows, stairs) and all of the objects (crystal chandelier, swag curtains, Chippendale chairs, embroidered rug, tables, portraits, and even tiny plates) are  $\frac{1}{12}$  their actual size. Even so, from the garlands that decorate the molding near the ceiling to the twisted balusters that support the hand railing on the stairs, every detail is perfectly molded, sculpted, painted, or carved, sometimes with a tool as dainty as a dental pick.

### VISIT THE BMA

and peek through  
the windows of 12  
delightful miniature  
rooms.

Eugene J. Kupjack (American, 1912-1991).  
Detail, *Entrance Hall in a Southern Plantation,  
1780-1810*. 1963-1984. Mixed media. 17 x  
35 x 15 inches. Commissioned by Elizabeth F.  
Cheney, Oak Park, Illinois. Gift of Elizabeth F.  
Cheney Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth  
S. Battye. © Kupjack E J Studio

### CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Most manufactured dollhouses and their furnishings are built to a 1:12 scale while homemade dollhouse furnishings might be considerably larger or even smaller. Ask students to bring in examples of manufactured and homemade dollhouse furniture and arrange them together in “rooms” (boxes) of various sizes. Decide which of the furnishings are “in scale” and would look “right” together in the same room. Decide which of them are “out of scale” (either too big or too small to make a convincing group).

Create a miniature classroom or other diorama. Designate a workable scale that is appropriate for your students' age and abilities.

**PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.**



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Eugene J. Kupjack. *Entrance Hall in a Southern Plantation, 1780-1810*

*Entrance Hall in a Southern Plantation, 1780-1810.* 1963-1984. Mixed media. 17 x 35 x 15 inches. Commissioned by Elizabeth F. Cheney, Oak Park, Illinois. Gift of Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth S. Battye. © Kupjack E J Studio