

Miniature Art Background

Miniature art is not a 'small painting'. Miniature art is not a novelty art. Miniature art is fine art. Miniature art is a specialty art and through the ages has been considered an art form. Miniature art is extremely detailed work, exquisite in color with a strength of composition. A compositional guide requires a gentle 1/6th scale of the actual subject. Small subjects not lending themselves to portrayal in one sixth scale may be accepted into various juried shows if the work embodies the spirit of miniaturism.

A fine miniature can be magnified to the size of a movie screen and it will hold together as a fine painting. Miniature art is a specialized art that's on a small scale and based on the techniques handed down from the book paintings and illuminations from as far back as the 8th century. There is much debate as to what is the correct technique. Some techniques such as stippling, hatching, and pointillism are usually only discovered under magnification. Whatever technique is used, it should be meticulously rendered and the workmanship flawless. Miniature art sometimes amazes the spectator's belief as to what is possible in such a small space.

Evaluating Miniature Art

In American miniature art, with its modern democracy and freedoms, we allow for many competing images and a maximum of diversity. In evaluating miniature art you should always consider originality of idea/concept/image, composition, design, and skill in handling media and details.

Pictures often tell a story. What these pictures say will be determined by the form, mood, and materials.

Form- Are all of the elements related and united to create its distinctive character? Does it form tonality in which the relation of the parts involves the relation to the whole?

Mood- Why does the picture create such a mood? What does the artist do to pique your interest? Does it evoke a certain reaction in you or is it just an illustration or historical document? It should utilize the content, give it a reason for being there, and delight the eye.

Material- Has the person mastered the skill needed for the media? Does the surface appear smooth with no brush strokes showing except for needed emphasis i.e. edge of a ruffle or lace? Does the frame enhance the picture and make it appear as a unit?

Components for creating forms which have coherence, unity with variety, balance and emphasis are as follows:

Line- What emotions does it produce?

What movement does it produce?

Value-(lights and darks) except as illusion, actual depth does not occur

What emotion does it produce?

What movement does it produce?

Color- most emotional of all components- it will set the mood

What emotion does it produce?

What movement does it produce?

Texture- In pictures, lines or motifs are used to create a textural effect to enrich the surface, i.e. satin, velvet, burlap, lace, feathers, fur.

Balance- Is the picture too complicated or too simplistic? Does the picture throw away the subject or is it in total balance and harmony? An odd number in the picture is better and creates both a tension and balance.