

## **A Call for Definition** by Jane Blake, March 26, 1987

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There are various definitions of the word "miniature" in the realm of art. To museums, collectors and many artists, the word is restricted to finely detailed pocket-sized paintings, usually portraits, drawn to precision using techniques established over centuries. Others think of "miniature" only as an adjective of size. Consequently, to this latter group, any type of art on a small scale is considered a miniature.

The lack of a clear definition has resulted in international shows becoming more exhibitions of small paintings and small works of art, than exhibits of the techniques and traditions of historically-treasured miniature art.

As a charter member of the Florida Miniature Art Society, my understanding was that we organized to help revive an almost lost art form; a traditionally treasured technique of art skillfully executed in fine detail, in a size that can be held in the hand.

As the Miniature Artists of America (M.A.A.) becomes established and decides upon definitions and norms, these are my questions: Are we trying to start a new trend involving every type of art created on a small scale? Have we opened our doors to small art which is artistic and executed with only a few defined lines and splotches of color? Or, are we dedicated to keeping alive the disciplined techniques of fine detail, layer upon layer of color, blended with infinitesimal brushstrokes? Specifically, what is our purpose as a miniature art society?

Most artists can paint, draw, or sculpt small. But very few artists have the discipline, ability, or developed skills to work in minute detail. It is this discipline and skill that identifies the traditional miniaturists and sets their work apart from all other types of art.

In order that the M.A.A. may select its members and achieve worldwide recognition, it is essential that we have a have a crystal clear definition of what constitutes the miniatures we accept for our exhibitions.

In my view, the M.A.A. should strive to select as members only the most skilled miniaturists; those whose works reflect the fine detail of the early masters. These are the works that will become tomorrow's family heirlooms and which will warrant space in museum collections of miniature art.

The specifications and definition of "miniature art" that the Miniature Artists of America decides upon is important. Is our goal to keep alive the special techniques and methods of traditional miniature art, or simply to encourage the production of small-sized art?