Vintage Worlds of Perfection

by Pam North

The world of miniatures captivated Thamer Alcigeary when he realized that he could create his own worlds, just the way he liked them. That's an enviable endeavor, especially when the real world he inhabits is less than ideal. Life in Baghdad, Iraq, where Alcigeary lives, encompasses severe heat, and the inconvenience of electricity being frequently switched off. “There are a lot of difficulties here,” Alcigeary explained, “so humans must deal with that in order to work and live.” Political conflict and unrest add to the problem. “I still believe that the situation will improve in Iraq, and I will continue in this beautiful art of miniatures, getting new ideas, and even using childhood dreams to inspire my dioramas.” It's easy to understand why Alcigeary finds satisfaction in creating worlds which he can totally control and make perfect, when everyday reality leaves so much to be desired.

He studies at the College of Basic Education, but said he had lots of free time. He tries to make one miniature a week, although he regretfully admits that sometimes he doesn't quite make that happen. He occasionally views videos on how to make miniatures, but rarely uses them for ideas, preferring to pursue his own slant on things. He likes the ideas of old places and vintage machines, so he has been working on a miniature 1930s office for his second diorama. He makes all his own miniatures, as there are none to be purchased in stores in Iraq. Using common materials such as wood and cardboard, used matchsticks, and spare cloth, he integrates them and paints them with oil and water colors, and sometimes even dyes things, like tiny shoes, with cocoa residue. He works magic with these everyday materials, infusing his own style and imagination, employing uncomplicated tools, and using his fingers to handle the smallest pieces. He visualizes what he is trying to create, imparting his vision with methodical deliberation, and soon he has devised a clever piece of furniture or household item that

epitomizes time-worn charm. “I like having my own world, with old details and dusty corners, and it makes me happy when I finish one,” he said. “The best part is the historical feel of my pieces. I want to show present generations a glimpse of the lives of their ancestors, and how it was in past times.” A typewriter, a telephone, and a radio, all with vintage styling, are some of the pieces that he has most enjoyed fabricating.

Alcigeary's dioramas are a perfect venue for stop-motion photography, an animation technique in which objects are moved incrementally and photographed, creating the illusion of movement, and he realizes the potential for that possibility for them.

He manages to find unusual sources of inspiration for his creativity, recently becoming fascinated

with Leonardo da Vinci's inventions. He fashioned a minute gun that was patterned after one that da Vinci had designed, and he intends make other replicas in the future.

His family is a source of support for him; they gave him a hearty “Well done!” after seeing his first work featured in a magazine.

Alcigeary doesn't sell any of his pieces, although he has received requests to buy some of them. He shows his creations on his Facebook account ([www.fb.com/thamerrw11](http://www.fb.com/thamerrw11)), and his blog ([www.thmax95diorama.tumblr.com](http://www.thmax95diorama.tumblr.com/)).