Cityscapes in Miniature

by Pam North

While Kevin D'Alenti lives in the Liege region of Belgium, he has become a fan of the United States, so he makes 1:18 scale dioramas with a specialty focus on New York City themes. His interest in miniatures initially was inspired with his acquisition of a 1:18 scale NYPD police car, which he wanted to display in a scenic diorama. He started with doing just the road, and went from there, and in the process he discovered that he had a real liking for miniature cars. Now he wants to make his largest diorama to feature his tiny vehicles.

D'Alenti currently works for a French miniature magazine called *Minauto Mag*, which since 2000 has published guides, called *Motor Miniature*, which are reference tools for any collector of model cars, and since 2007, also has published the bi-monthly MinAuto magazine for fans of miniature cars. “They are specialists in die-cast miniature cars, and they have a special section tutorial on dioramas, which explains how I work with objects or models,” said D'Alenti. The realism of his street scenes and store interiors is amazing, and his artful attention to detail and inventive use of materials is what puts the lifelike spin on them. He manages to capture the gritty feel of city streets and weathered building facades so perfectly that it is eerily like being there.

He elaborated on other aspects of his creativity. “I will be doing exhibitions in Belgium. I have one in the month of August, at which there will be a contest for the best diorama, which I hope to win, but the main thing is to have fun. I'm also currently talking to an Australian director about a future project, but nothing is scheduled yet. I wish I could plan things better, but that it is very difficult.”
D'Alenti's family supports him, following his efforts, and encouraging him to continue. “My wife is very patient; she likes what I do, and is always there for me. She is the one who accompanies me all the time in all my travels.” He combines his home life and his hobby in a balanced way. “When I'm home alone and I have finished the household tasks, I work there, but when my family is at home, I don't work on my dioramas, because my family comes first.” His workplace is a simple office with shelves for his supplies, and two lamps on each side to provide good lighting. He cites his cutter as his most valuable tool. “The biggest challenge in working in miniature is to attain realism. I want each diorama to have the effect of a real building. I don't use any machines to achieve that, but I do everything by hand. I also don't use kits, which makes it even more difficult for me, but I like challenges.”
Asked where he finds his inspiration, D'Alenti laughed, “My imagination! I often have been to New York, so I know how I should do the sets, and also the Internet helps me tremendously.”

So far he has preferred keeping his dioramas rather than selling them. “I have a hard time parting with them, because I have put so much effort into them, and had so much fun doing them, especially the Brooklyn rooms and West 42 Street, as these are my two best. *Parlis* is definitely one I intend to keep. They are for me, to satisfy my passion.” He has received a proposal to show his diorama in an art gallery in New York, but because it is very fragile, he has decided against shipping it. “It could interest me to possibly work for a celebrity or a museum,” he mused.

When asked what he loves most about miniatures, D'Alenti said he likes most everything he does, as his passion for his craft is the real pleasure, but he also really likes achieving realistic results.

The future of miniatures also intrigues him. “With technology, it will be interesting to see what lies ahead. We now can remake the world with just a computer.” His next project will be trying to make a model with the theme *Back to the Future 2*.