Shops in Miniature

By Pam North

Who doesn't love a miniature store? It's a study in the fun of purchasing, mentally turning oneself into a tiny-scale shopper - with lots of miniature money, of course! Each shelf, counter, and display space must be studied at length, to take note of each carefully chosen object, and to appreciate how all has come together. Gabriele Layne has created two delightful miniature shops to showcase a collection of tiny treasures.

For her *Granny's Toy Store,* Layne had to construct the setting herself. The box walls and floor were cut, using her calculated dimensions, and the floor was created with craft sticks after cutting off the rounded ends. The furnishings, such as the wall units, shelves, and the counter, were cut from wood pieces, and then assembled. Most of the toys were purchased, with a few made from scratch, and some of the older pieces that had been damaged were repaired and repainted.

The materials used were an assortment of scrap wood pieces, acrylic cuts for the counter, wood turnings, paint, craft sticks, and plywood sheets. It all came together beautifully.

Layne elaborated, “The toy shop is an example of making miniatures on a budget, using everyday items found in toy shops, or at Christmas markets. Even children’s play toys that are small enough can be used as long as they fit into the appropriate dollhouse scale. Having an eye for miniatures is a great part of it. In the toy store, the clowns and balloons are cake decorations; the balls in a net are marbles and beads, and the net is a doily that is stretched over a wood hoop on four legs. The three large dollhouses are tiny Chinese gift boxes, found in a gift shop, that open by taking the roof off; they are covered with colored straw and are absolutely lovely pieces. Little dolls from baby showers can be dressed and wigged; buttons and party favors make great toys; and beads on a string are great jumping jacks or other toys. Metal train sets, placed in wood boxes made from stir sticks, are great boxed sets. The tiny room boxes, cut from card stock and assembled, are trimmed with lace, ribbon, and small wood pieces, and are inexpensive to make. Matchbox-brand trucks are great; printed game boards, small teddy bears, jewelry pieces such as the gnomes in front of the cash register. The matchbox scenes, and all of the pull toys. are a specialty of Germany in the Saxony region, the *Erzgebirge*, where they also make the wood-turned toys in the small wagon.”

Layne's other shop is called the *Playtime Toy Shop.* This one started with a collection of very special miniatures pieces that needed a home. There were not enough for a large room box so she used a small gift box with the just right dimensions to be the perfect setting to hold these treasures. A square opening was cut into the lid of the gift box, and the opening was trimmed with ribbon. Special wallpaper with a border picturing dolls at a tea party was pasted inside. Furniture was painted with acrylics, and two card stock dollhouses were assembled from kits that included printed paper for the walls. The bunny picture on the left wall is a printout that she framed. The metal high chair, bench. and rocking chair, on the shelf, dresser in the box, were bought and painted, as were the two tiny teddy bears, made from earrings, on the wall shelf. In the dollhouse on the table, there is tiny resin furniture which she also painted, and a box of children’s books on the floor was a printout project that was folded and glued. The small wood turnings that are hand painted are from Germany, the tiny cars are Hallmark ornaments. The game boxes are printouts that were folded and glued. The Indian on the horse with wheels and the teddy bears are from an estate sale. There is also a corner shelf with work by Karen Markland.

The materials used were: light pink spray paint, acrylic paint, textured wallpaper, dollhouse wallpaper, dollhouse molding, light blue fabric, computer printouts for the picture and box of books, border paste, and tacky glue. It all came together exactly as she had envisioned it. Her favorite parts about this piece

were the small table and chairs, with the baby doll having tea from the tiny tea set, and the tiny dog clock on the wall above the table. The dollhouses also were the most fun to create.

Layne doesn't plan to sell these miniature shops, but instead will display them in her home and at functions, and perhaps at a local library to promote the hobby of miniatures.

More creations are in Layne's future, as she has many 1:24 scale unfinished kits beckoning her. She also plans to do more teaching at workshops and traveling to shows.

Layne summed up her passion, “Hunting for miniatures has always been fun for me; it makes the hobby more affordable and gratifying.”