

# Miniature works are large on talent

By ROBERT TROTTER  
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## REVIEW

**W**HAT DO ARTISTS Lorraine Fink, William Ellsworth, Ann Iott, Geneva Beavers, Fay Zetlin, Gene Jones, and Joe DeJulio have in common?

Absolutely nothing, except they make tiny pictures and their stylistic differences make the Fifth Juried Miniature Exhibition at Norfolk's Hermitage Foundation Museum a quality act.

The exhibit, which embraces all media and dimensions up to 12 inches, was culled from 229 works submitted by 84 artists. Fifty-four pieces by 49 artists were accepted.

The art of miniature painting dates from the 16th century. The form was first pressed into service on playing cards and the vellum used by the medieval illuminator. Used frequently as a portrait in the latter case, the work was filled with allegories and symbolism. Today, though rarely done, such works are just small paintings or, better, creations in which the artist is disciplining himself with the restrictions of a smaller size.

This is a rich collection, ranging from etchings to photography with glances at sculpture, assemblages, watercolor and drawing covering every style and technique imaginable. Although the realistic works are more readily recognizable, there are pieces such as Geneva Beavers' "Landscape No. 2" in which the artist combines color and vivid naive forms in one delightful work.

The miniature exhibition represents a good cross section of the art by Hampton Roads' artists. Its variety, quality and scope speak well of the art from a single area. When you compare the realism of Vonnie Whitworth's watercolor with the surreal aspects of Thomas Bolz' small sculpture of a pair of hands holding a watch and chain, there is a completeness of thought present likely to go unnoticed in many exhibitions of larger works.

In another frame of reference there is the Julia Monk painting "August Absense" which is subtle, almost minimal in concept, of a single birdhouse on a pole with indications of woods and sky in the background. It is quiet, colorful in its way, and extremely effective as a work of

art. And it is only 12 inches wide.

Peyton Campbell has created two mixed media works similar in concept to the box art of Joseph Cornell. Each contains a tiny microcosm of life expressed through rich design and cool precision involving bits of maps, clouds or a prism. Each element is part of the overall texture and life of the composition. It, too, works well on the smaller scale.

Precision aptly describes many of the miniatures. Edward Carson's "Classic" is a finely toned pencil study of an elderly woman holding a bright red cup of Coke. It provides a timely commentary as does the Kemmety Kirby beachscape of clouds, water, dunes and a bright red kite yearning for the warmer months.

Spike Splicha's "Sleeper" is just that. Picture this: a man dozing in an easy chair, a Tarzan comic book open on his lap. On a table by his right side is a Philco gothic-styled radio and on his left a dog, sprawled out sleeping. All of this is set upon a braided rug. It is painted ceramic and detailed so each braid is crystal clear. The work not only exemplifies the precise nature found in many of the works but also adds a note of warmth.

As for a large painting composition rendered on a small scale, don't miss Jeanne Johnston's witty "The Sickness: I hate to tell you lady but your duck's in love." It features two figures and a love-sick duck in a bold design developed with clean uncluttered forms and color.

Judging the exhibition was Virginia Beach artist Martin Johnson, lately of New York City. From the range of material showing he had some difficult choices to make, but he selected a lively and well-resolved collection comparable with anything its type and size.

"The Fifth Juried Miniature Exhibition" will remain on view through March 15. The Hermitage Foundation Museum is located at 7637 North Shore Road, Norfolk. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday. Admission free to this exhibit.