

Your home in miniature

From the study of paleontology to creation of architectural miniatures: the lifelong artistic journey of Gerard Klein Hofmeijer.

By Donald Morcone

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIEN SPIJKERS



Netherlands native Gerard Klein Hofmeijer is a classically trained scientist, scholar and creator of fine miniatures and replicas of historic structures, homes, garden vignettes and three dimensional facades in a variety of scales from 1:87 to 1:60. “The fascination with small things is a leitmotif in my life,” states Gerard. He recalls the day almost 40 years ago when as a young student he entered a room in the Department of Vertebrate Paleontology at Utrecht University. “The room was filled with many old and finely crafted wooden

cabinets, each with numerous small drawers filled with very small transparent boxes containing small fossil molars of small mammals.”

This was paradise found for the young student embarking on his

doctoral studies and an important scientific career. Klein Hofmeijer worked in that special room behind his microscope for two years and several years later, at the completion of his doctoral thesis the university



TOP: Portrait of Gerard Klein Hofmeijer with his miniature “The Heimstede” (scale 1: 75). **RIGHT:** A 17th century Amsterdam canal house façade in 1:70 scale. Part of the series “Preservation of period Dutch architecture in fine miniature” exhibiting at D.Thomas Fine Miniatures.



department was closed. This sparked his journey into creating fine miniatures as his new life calling.

His scientific discipline for the analysis of structure, function, inspection and dissection of the most intricate detail coupled with his appreciation for classic and contemporary Dutch architectural style offered the perfect combination of skills for his new career path.

On a lark, he created a scale model of his brother's classic Dutch farmhouse. The project was a collaboration with his wife, Pien Spijkers, an architectural draftsman and photographer. Pien scaled the specifications to ensure miniature accuracy, created intricate miniature computer-aided designs and Gerard was once again behind the microscope. Together, they created a very special workshop in their home and the concept of "Your Home in Miniature" was born.

RIGHT: House in Belgium complete with garden and outdoor lightning (scale 1:87). **BELOW:** House shown from the back with garden and garden furniture in more detail (scale 1:87).

BELOW RIGHT: A 1:87-scale brass lantern with milled glass pin-heads as light globes, containing SMD-LED's.

"I am an autodidact perfectionist and in setting up my workshop I searched for the most suitable tools or made them myself." Gerard studied the techniques of railroad model artisans, the use of components of photo-etched brass and based on this self-study he developed several of his own proprietary techniques, including his

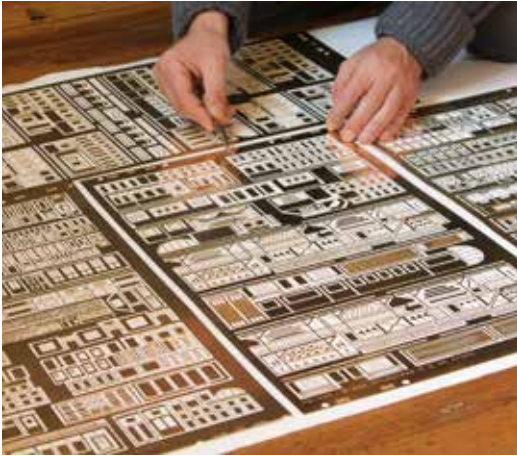
signature hand-painted brick patterns on paper that offer a 3D suggestion of original brick work, as is nicely shown in the 17th Century country house "Vreedenhoev".

The Klein Hofmeijer portfolio is truly robust. His signature projects include miniature replicas of beautiful homes, their surrounding gardens,



outdoor furniture, lighting and even the automobiles found in the driveway. Every "Your Home in Miniature" project is unique, tells its own story and very often requires collaboration with other artisans. For the "House in Belgium" created in 1:87 scale, Gerard called upon his former university colleague Hans Brinkerink to advise and create plants and flowers with the





ABOVE: Shown here are the 4 sheets of photo-etched brass used for the “Heimstede” project. They have a thicknesses of 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, and 0.4 mm. Sheet size is 12” x 20”. **LEFT:** “The Heimstede” is based on a Villa in the Netherlands. The scale of this house is 1:75. **BELOW LEFT:** The Heimstede in detail showing the plants made from real organic materials and the garden furniture that was made out of photo-etched brass.



ABOVE RIGHT AND BELOW: The owners of a newly restored old farmhouse in Southern France asked Gerard and Pien to make a miniature replica to celebrate the “completion” of the project. In order to replicated the natural stone used in the real farmhouse they needed to come up with a new technique. Pien made many photos so the size of each stone could be realistically copied in technical computer drawings. These patterns were then etched in brass by a company in Birmingham to serve as underlay’s. With different mixtures of color pigments and matte lacquer, each stone was build up on top of the brass with the correct depth and color. This required much patients but Gerard’s clients were very pleased with he results. Scale 1: 65.





same accuracy and attention to detail as the house structure. Their successful artistic collaborations may also be seen in "Heimstede," created in 1:75 scale.

Each of Gerard's projects are truly unique and no two projects are alike. For several clients, he has created miniature facades of their home that may be displayed as a sculpture or hung on the wall as a piece of art. Examples of these intricate facades include the cookery shop in Gouda, the classic colonial-style house in Scheveningen, and the ancient farmhouse in Southern France. Each of these façade projects are created with the same techniques, attention to detail and fine materials as his full structures and dioramas.

In addition to the creation of custom miniatures for private clients, Klein Hofmeijer's also created works based on his love of classic Amsterdam architecture and passion for preservation of their unique style as an enduring architectural genre. Examples of these works include two unique facades housed in custom shadowboxes. The first is his rendition of a classic Dutch Canal House in 1:70 scale, complete with accurate Dutch flag, bicycle and outdoor bench. The second is his interpretation of Johannes Vermeer's 1658 "The

ABOVE: "Vreedenhoeve" is an example of a 17th century country house in the Netherlands, as built by wealthy merchants in those day's to escape from the dirty city of Amsterdam (scale 1: 80).

RIGHT: Façade of a 17th century house in Delft, as painted around 1658 by Johannes Vermeer on his famous "The Little Street".

Little Street." In this piece Gerard applied his scientific discipline to analyze the original Vermeer painting of a classic structure in Delft. His attention to extreme detail is his offering to the world: for the first time, a glimpse of the full façade of the house portrayed in Vermeer's enduring painting may be studied. From this significant work, we are offered a look into life in 17th Century Delft, and both lovers of art and history will

benefit from his interpretation. These façade shadowboxes formed the basis for Gerard's first solo exhibition in the United States from November 15, 2016 through March 15, 2017, hosted by Darren T. Scala in his gallery at D. Thomas Fine Miniatures in New York.

Gerard's innate curiosity, mastery of the technical skills for the creation of fine scale miniatures, and artistic authority positions him for future creation of artistic masterpieces. "Working with new clients offers many opportunities and surprises." He is well poised to take on the challenge of new architectural styles beyond his signature classic Dutch works. We look forward to seeing his new works, expansion of style and creation of new techniques. **DHM**



GET IN TOUCH

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