

# 宮廷舞廳

## (Ron Hubble's *Palace Ballroom*)

By Barbara J. Aardema

**H**ow does an 18th-century English style salon and ballroom conceived in New York and developed in St. Louis wind up in Taiwan? Here's the story of an undertaking that pulls people from three continents together to produce a sumptuous roombox for public display.

Ron Hubble of St. Louis, Missouri, is known in the miniatures world for his architectural elements, sculptures and fondness for Robert Adam designs. While manning his booth at the 1996 International Guild of Miniature Artisans New York show, Ron was approached by Wen-Jen Lin, retired chairman of Taiwan Fluorescent Lamp Company. Mr. Lin, who in recent years has developed a reputation as a

In this sumptuous ballroom, pink and a very subdued blue and cream create a subtle color scheme. Resin columns cast from a stock group of architectural elements Ron Hubble designed are painted pink, black, oxblood and white to simulate marble. Urns on pedestals, the candelabra and four torchères are by Hubble & Company. A long marble-topped table beneath the back wall painting is by John Hodgson as are the flower stands. Flowers are by Sandra Henry Wall, chandeliers by Phyllis Tucker.



Photo by Ron Barlow



# Miniature Collector

collector with an eye for excellence, was impressed with the room-boxes Ron had at the show and commissioned him to design an English-style salon and ball-room. The piece was to be put on display in a miniatures museum Mr.

Lin was opening later that year in Taiwan.

"I found his works just fit what we were looking for," Mr. Lin said. "England has a very glorious history, leaving tremendous assets we want to introduce to Taiwanese people here.

Besides, we had seen one of Hubble's works in the Carole and Barry Kaye Museum of Miniatures in Los Angeles, (*MC* April '97 "Gallery") and were so impressed by that."

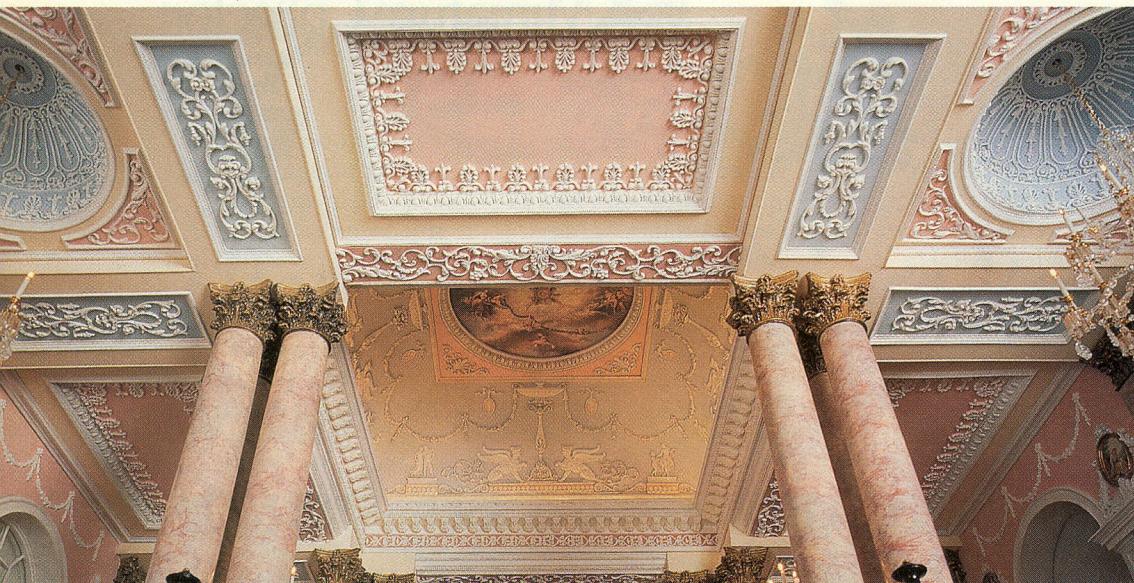
The match was good. Ron drew up plans, Mr.

Lin approved and the project was underway.

"The layout was my own design," Ron said, "but I was inspired by the entry hall of Kedleston, an English house designed by Robert Adam, a late-18th-century architect."







Above, a focal point in the ballroom ceiling is a round Hans Droot painting surrounded by scores of bas relief friels and figures. The painting crowns an arched square great cove. "It was fun to build. I love to work with half and full domes and arches. I love the feeling the arches add to an architectural design."

Below, Ron's company hand painted the ballroom floor to depict many faux inlays. The round table and red and gold chairs are from Bespaq. Hubble & Company upholstered the chairs. Ron added a wooden, painted faux marble top to the table. Hans Droot, who executed all the paintings in the ballroom, adapted a Canaletto painting to fit the Bespaq harpsichord. Half-round tables are by Charlotte Hunt.



Photo by Ron Barlow

Adam's penchant for Palladian windows is immediately evident in Hubble's salon, and the arch of the window is repeated in a narrow inset that fronts an antechamber between the salon and ballroom.

"(The antechamber inset is) the most complicated area of the whole design," Ron said. "It holds the apse where the orchestra balcony is." Arches are a Hubble trademark. He's intrigued by them and enjoys the challenge of making them work in miniature despite the necessity of many models before the final piece is finished.

"I was most proud of the little shell niche in the antechamber that has the half-shell top. For years I thought, 'How do you make those?' One day while driving down the street, I saw one on a building and it dawned on me how to do it in miniature. They're curved. The shell itself is a recessed curve that decreases in size as it goes back into the arch." The arch also houses a little cut out area through which a viewer on the salon side of the roombox can see the exterior side of the ballroom, the ballroom floral arrangement and chandelier.

"I'm into vistas," Ron continued. "I love *ensuite*, a French term for views used to help design rooms so you can see from one room to the next and next. It gives another dimension to the design." Beyond the orchestra balcony is a balcony that is visible from the salon.

Ron and his crew—Rick Compton, Bill Cambron and Brian



Ciscell— combined talents to achieve more of the Hubble & Company look. In the ballroom, they faux painted resin columns Ron had made from a stock group of architectural components he had developed. The pink “marble” columns lend strength to the confection of blues, pinks and creams on the walls and ceiling. The ballroom floor was hand painted to represent various inlays.

Amid the splendor, however, is the mundane. Ron fashioned a tiny leaf on the balcony from toilet paper.

But getting back to the romance of the room, consider the candelabrum and torchairs by Hubble and Company. The fixtures cast a warm, subtle glow to complement the illumination from four chandeliers by Phyllis Tucker that hang suspended under each arch in the

*Right*, looking from the outside in, this vista allows viewers another angle from which to appreciate the ballroom. All instruments and stands are by Bespaq.

*Below*, the salon side of the two-part vignette features a red chair and settee by Charlotte Hunt of England, framed portrait prints and mirrors by John Hodgson, more Hans Droot paintings and a chinoiserie chest on the left wall by Natasha. Ron painted the design on the rug.



Photos by Ron Barlow







Above, Hans Droot painted the white desk near the right wall.

Below left, Don Mehan's chandelier casts a soft glow in the salon when the vignette's exterior is illuminated.

Below right, an arched cove separates the salon from the ballroom.

ballroom. Phyllis also provided medallion masters for the resin figures flanking portraits in the salon.

"I wanted to dedicate this room to Phyllis Tucker, with my thanks for her helping me get involved in miniatures," Ron said. "I met her about the second show I did. I really didn't know a whole lot about what I was doing or what to do next. The 'fairy godmother of miniatures' helped keep me motivated, find work and gave me numerous sources."

Among sources tapped for this commission were artisans with roots in the United States, England, Holland and Ireland. All paintings in the ballroom, including a round one on the ceiling, are by Hans Droot, a Dutch artist who now lives in Herman, Missouri. Droot

also painted the Bespaq harpsichord with scenes from a Canaletto painting. Portraits in the salon are framed prints from John Hodgson; the red chairs and settee in the salon are by Charlotte Hunt. Hodgson and Hunt are from England. Don Mehan of Las Vegas, Nevada, crafted the salon's chandelier. "The most beautiful pieces in the room are two demi-lune tables on the back wall," Ron said. "They're by Michael Walton of Ireland."

Bespaq provided musical instruments and several pieces of furniture Hubble & Company upholstered or marbled.

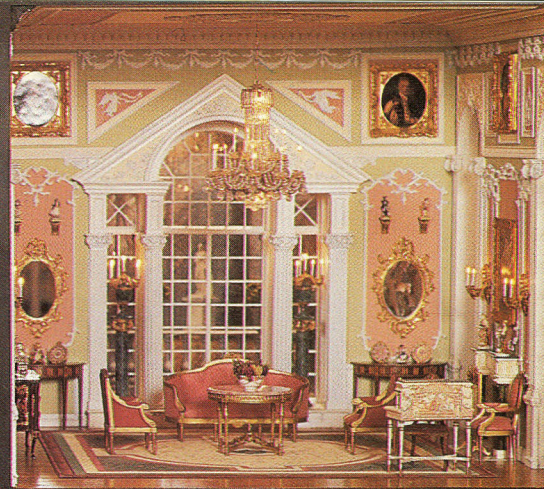
All the building, architectural detailing and gathering of accessories transpired as faxes flew back and forth between Taiwan and St. Louis. Mr. Lin trusted Hubble & Company as a long-distance



Photos by Ron Barlow







The entire vignette—ballroom, antechamber and salon—measures six feet long.

Photo by Ron Barlow

supervisor. "This is the first piece Ron worked for us," Mr. Lin stated. "In fact, it started as two pieces and then was put together in one after fax discussions between our two sides. We only visited St. Louis once. We trust in his good work."

The six-foot room-box, on permanent display at the Miniatures Museum of Taiwan, is in good company. Mr. Lin's 10,300 square-foot museum, which had a soft opening in October 1996 and a grand opening in March 1997, houses over 100 displays of works from such artisans as Brooke Tucker, Ray Whitley

and Terry Noack and Bill Lankford from the United States; John Howard of Canada; and Robert Stubbs, John McColgan, Glorious Twelfth and Trigger Pond of the United Kingdom. The collection continues to grow.

"My wife and I first got in touch with miniature houses in Holland," Mr. Lin said. "We started a collection of them about twelve years ago. Our son, then in Seattle, took us to a miniatures shop. Interested, we attended a miniatures show in Seattle in March 1993. Thus, we started our extensive collection of miniatures."

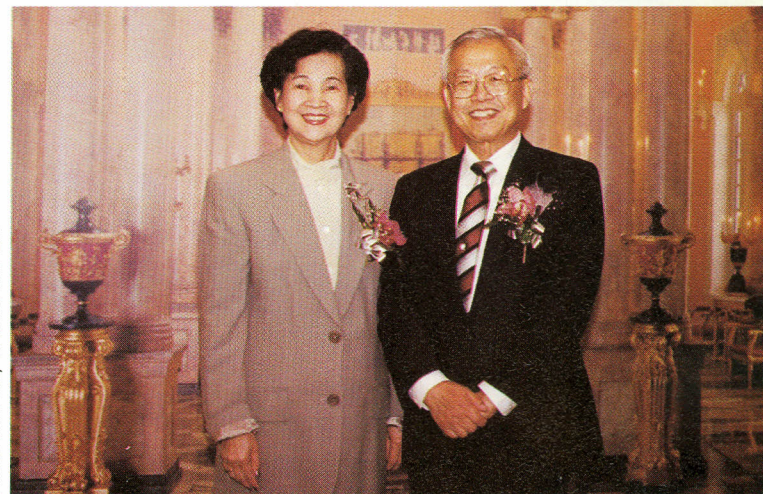


Photo courtesy of Wen-Jen Lin

Mr. and Mrs. Wen-Jen Lin pose inside their Miniatures Museum of Taiwan.

Mr. Lin said he founded a museum devoted solely to the miniatures he collects to celebrate the art form with his countrymen. The Palace Museum in Taiwan has a good collection of miniatures, he said, but the hobby isn't popular in China. "They are so far for the nobles only. We intend to make it popular in Taiwan."

The Lins' noble efforts reflect the well-known National Association of Miniature

Enthusiasts' motto—Only through sharing can we really enjoy our treasures—as they expose the work of Hubble and artisans from many Western nations to our Eastern neighbors. ■

*Miniatures Museum of Taiwan is at B1, No. 96, 1st Sec. Chien-Kuo N. Rd., Taipei 104, Taiwan. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.*

*Ron Hubble's address is: 4060 A Hartford, St. Louis, MO 63116.*

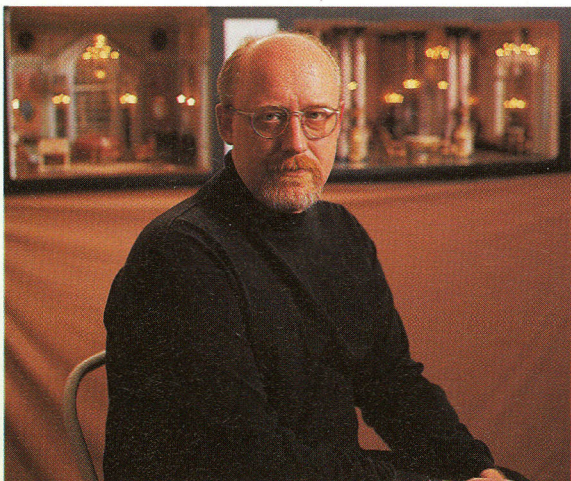


Photo by Ron Barlow

Ron Hubble pauses with the finished *Palace Ballroom* in the background.



# Miniature Collector

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Anne Timpson's  
Antique Dollhouses

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