



Gayle Baillargeon.

Petworth Miniatures

Marilyn Ormson had the pleasure of meeting **Gayle Baillargeon** at a show in Orlando and knew that when she gets started on quarter scale (1/48ths) this will be the place to start.

Gayle Baillargeon certainly seems to have an eclectic background leading to her working with miniatures. She was born and raised in Quebec and, following a university education in English and classical studies, she has been a race horse trainer, an Ontario Racing Commission Paddock Judge, an interior decorator, artist, and has owned a bookstore. You can, however, detect a glimmer of a couple of good bases for mini skills in this list.

I asked Gayle when her interest in minis began and she told me:

I've always liked small things. In my baby book, for age three my Mom wrote, 'Likes books and tiny little dolls'. I guess I really never grew up. I started making miniatures when I was in high school and originally sold fully furnished room boxes. Then I did hand carved furniture and

animal sculptures and miniature oil paintings. I reinvented myself every couple of years... very short attention span. I can't remember who asked if I could do something in quarter scale but I think I did them a quarter scale oil painting. Then I started playing around with computer designs for furniture kits and looked into laser cutting. It just snowballed from there.

As I hail from the UK and had visited Petworth House in West Sussex I was curious to find out how her business got its name.

I read an article about Petworth House and liked the name. With all our animals it seemed appropriate so I called our stable Petworth Stable and my business Petworth Miniatures. (Gayle's animal menagerie is currently two dogs, six cats and five horses!)

A complete bar room in Jolley's Emporium.





Hungerford Manor based on Belton House.

Besides the quality of her work, the other thing which really appeals to me is that you can buy whole rooms full of a particular style of furniture. I often find it really frustrating to set off on a theme only to find I have to hunt all over the place to gather enough items together.

She creates all the furniture needed to fit her various buildings. For example, if you buy a building like her Jolley's Emporium you can also buy enough items to fit one room out as a bar if you wanted to.

Another example of a room full of her furniture is her creation of the oval room in the Pittock Mansion in Portland, Oregon. Again, all the furniture is beautifully harmonious and finely detailed. Keep remembering this is working in a scale where quarter of an inch equals one foot. This makes an average chair about three quarters of an inch high.

Gayle usually works on one style at a time; Chippendale, Mission, Victorian etc. She researches the style from her extensive library at home and spends hours on her laptop choosing several pieces that will go together in a room setting. Once she has chosen a piece, she draws the outline and then starts to visually break the kit into pieces that will assemble as easily as possible and still have the detail she loves. A single piece of furniture can take anywhere from a couple of hours to several days to design.

Samples will then be cut until it works perfectly. Occasionally it will only need the first attempt if all her calculations are spot on and she likes the finished product. She is very particular about the piece looking as real as possible and, as anyone working in quarter scale knows, this is the ultimate challenge. The introduction of laser cutting has made a huge difference to what can be achieved in this scale.



The wonderful Pittock room re-creation.



Petworth Mouse House exterior.

Petworth Mouse House interior.

Fantasies and kitchen design

Trying to define what Gayle can make is like trying to name the length of the proverbial piece of string. As already mentioned her 'standard' range covers a wide selection of lovely furniture, based on actual full sized antiques but there are also some fantasy pieces for your woodland creatures and other accessories.

The items for her Mouse House, based on Jill Barkley's 'Brambly Hedge', are enough to convert even non-fantasy folk like me.

As you can see there are all sorts of houses and various 'shells' to go with her furnishings but she will undertake any commission should you not find exactly what you want.

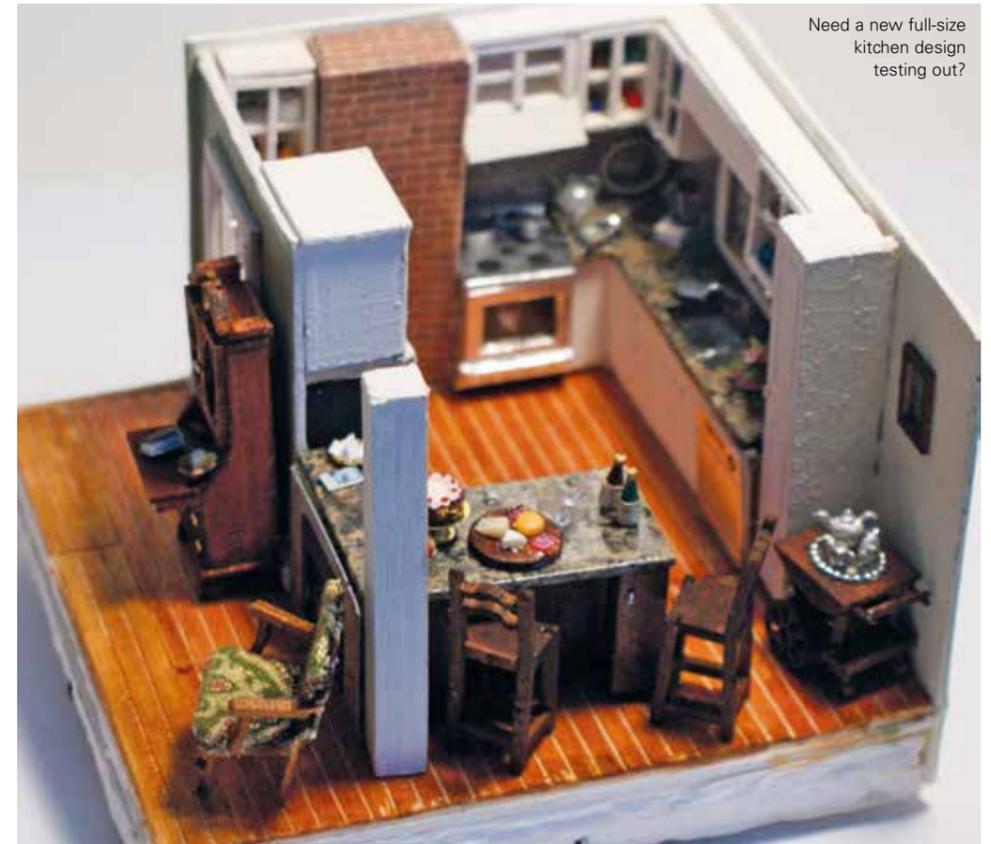
On one occasion she used her skills to create a proposed kitchen re-do in her parents new home – now there's an idea for a commission!

Gayle also has a wonderful safari camp based on the real Cottar's 1920 safari camp. You can buy everything you need to complete it from her website.

Hungerford Manor

She is continually working on new ideas; one of which is a carved panelled Tudor chest which, at the time of writing, had just come back from its first cutting. She says "The sample is awesome!" Something like that can see her working 8 or 10 hours at a time, without her realising how long she is sitting; she is so focussed on the 'new' idea.

Her next major project is a manor house called Hungerford Manor; loosely based on Belton House – a classic seventeenth century English country house. It will have 24 rooms as well as attics. The house will be



Need a new full-size kitchen design testing out?

issued as a room-a-month and the first room is scheduled for release in May 2014. Each room fits against the adjoining rooms to make the full manor but they can also be built as individual room boxes.

Gayle is revelling in the size which is allowing her to create different wall panelling and carved ceilings for each room. The two story staircase has 'wrought iron' railings that took hours to design but I bet the effect will be worth it.

If you would like to be on a mailing list for information about the Manor and receive advance information on it as it evolves, just email Gayle. For a sneak peek at the Manor visit her gallery.

INFORMATION

Like me, you can spend many happy hours wandering around Gayle's website but she even welcomes real-life visitors by appointment. If you're travelling between Montreal and Toronto you can stop by and indulge your love of miniatures in both 1/12 and 1/4 scale.

Failing that, you can catch Gayle and her works at these shows in 2014:

- Molly Cromwell's Sarasota, FL January, 2014
- Aminiminiatureshow.weebly.com - March online show
- Montreal - March 2014
- MET Toronto - November 2014

I am pretty sure that anyone with an interest in quarter scale miniatures will keep coming across Gayle's name. I see her mentioned frequently in the usual forum chatter amongst enthusiasts. She is also a member of the Quarter Connection, LED, N.A.M.E, president of the Miniature Enthusiasts of Ottawa, Ontario 2015 Gathering chair, and will appear in those places too. Be sure to check out all her fabulous stuff.

Gayle Baillargeon

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The Petworth safari camp.