

A Collaborative Effort

Williamson Walton Marble draws on the work of more than 30 notable artisans to make "Midnight in the Pied-à-terre"

by Judeé Williamson and Nicole Walton Marble

Williamson Walton Marble wowed the crowds at the 2000 Chicago International with "Midnight in the Pied-à-terre," Judeé Williamson's first roombox in almost ten years. This collaboration between Judeé and her furniture-making partner Nicole Walton Marble was inspired by a photograph from *Architectural Digest* magazine. The project features the work of more than 30 artisans, and salutes the books of their friend, collector Mary Fisher.



Judeé

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Several years ago, three of my friends, including artisan Brooke Tucker, sent me the same clipping from *Architectural Digest* that showed a very luxurious *pied-à-terre*, or "temporary or secondary lodging." The focal point of the room was a gorgeous canopied bed. I loved the room, and imagined it right away as a completed roombox, with pieces by Nicole.

For the next two years, with this project in mind, I collected accessories at shows like Chicago International and Philadelphia Miniaturia, where so many quality items are available. My vision of the room evolved as I happened upon delightful decorative pieces.

The lovely tall columns from Jim Coates determined the ceiling height of the shell, which was built for us by Bob's Repair in Yuma. We found the spectacular fireplace and mirror at C&J Gallery. Renée Kutcher marbleized the columns and fireplace, instantly creat-

ing a regal look in the room. With just those items in place, I began placing spare furniture pieces around the room to get a feel for the space I had to work with. That process helped me determine the floor and wall dimensions.

I decided on a neutral, hand-made textured carpet by Judith Adams that wouldn't overwhelm the room. I later chose similar neutral tones for the drapery, upholstery, and bed dressing.

Once the walls were in place, I mirrored one side to further accent the bed and make the room appear

wider. I put mullions over the mirror to add texture and to continue the French style we had chosen.

Sconces and candelabra by Phyllis Tucker and a Scott Hughes chandelier perfectly fit my vision for the lighting.

Nicole

As the room began to take shape, Judeé and I researched ideas for the furniture. After consulting many sources, we decided on classically elegant French country for most of the pieces.

As in the magazine photo, the bed would be the focal point of the room. Because the bed would be handled so many times during each phase of dressing, I knew it had to be structurally strong. The canopy is held up with braces rising from the bedposts that were then covered with draped fabric.

I made a French-style armoire to

place at the back of the room behind the bed. Judeé wired the cabinet interiors to brighten up the dark corner of the room and to illuminate the china pieces — mostly Bespaq chinoiserie — she placed inside.

Judeé knew that she wanted a table and chairs at the back of the room and together we came up with a round table, five inches in diameter. We did not worry much about the style of its legs as the table would be skirted. For the chairs, we gold-leafed and antiqued our French armchair kits. My French-country caned sofa contrasts nicely with the more formal French chairs and adds depth and focal interest to the center of the room.

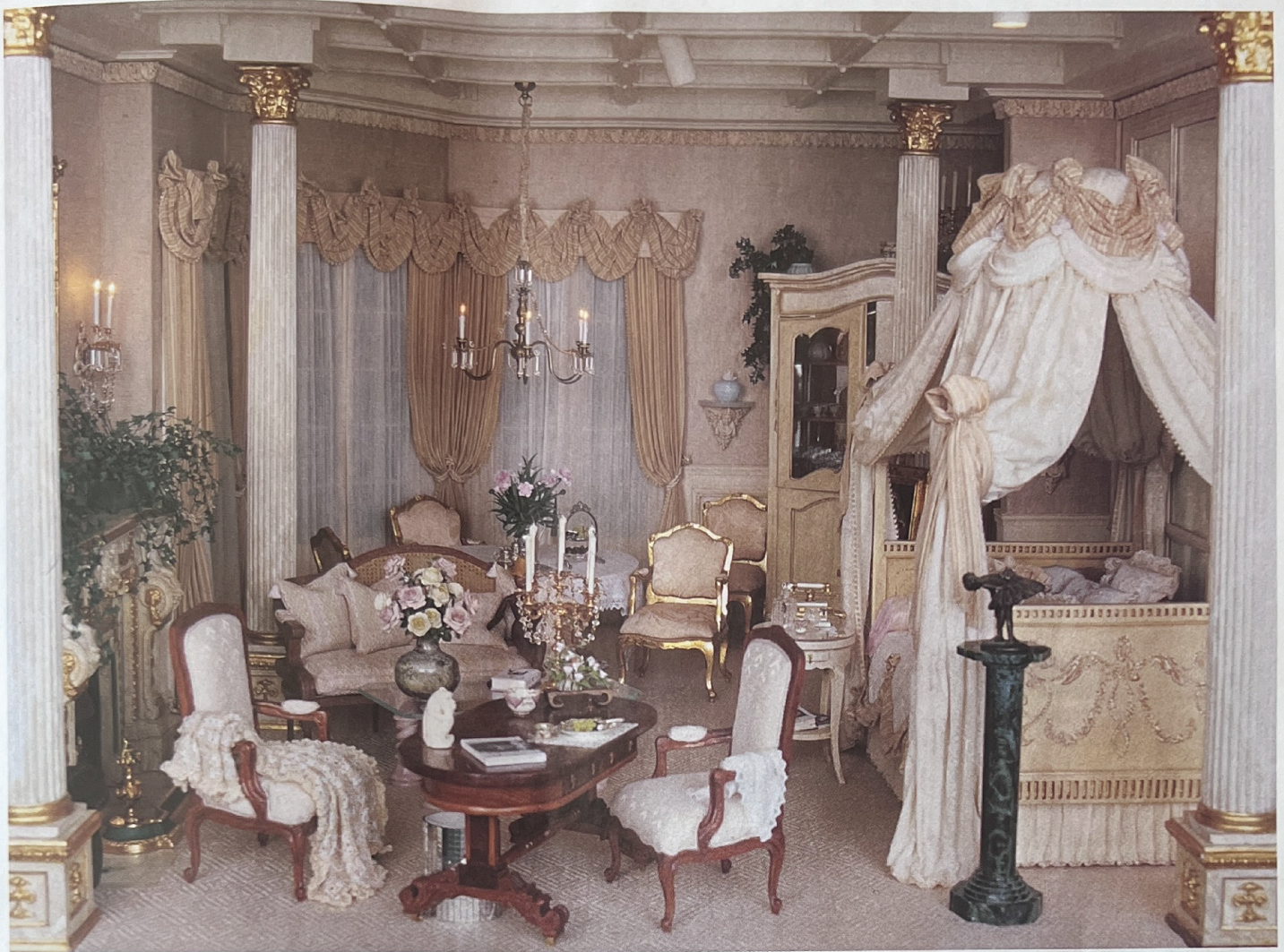
I enjoy the challenge of building French furniture; the French built their furniture in their own way, beholden to none! Figuring out why and how they used certain methods is part of the fun of making miniatures, plus this piece allowed me to show off my caning skills!

Judith Adams made the fabric for the sofa and I made the mannequin that rests on it. The mannequin is a reproduction of a full-sized one in Judeé's studio, a carved wooden mannequin from Spain. Judeé plans on including a mannequin in all her future roomboxes as a signature item.

We decided on more French country for the foreground, but opted for a dark accent wood and taller pieces such as the beautiful green pedestal by Jack Blackham and the Petite Elite



Nicole



brass figure that sits atop it to add perspective. Rooms appear deeper when tall pieces are placed in the foreground and shorter, similarly styled pieces are set in the background.

We spent a lot of time deciding on a style for the desk at the front of the roombox. The chairs are French, but we felt that a French table at the front would be too leggy and familiar, and the English style too straight and fussy. We finally settled on a mid-Victorian desk with columnar legs and a burlwood desktop.

Since the desk was to be front and center, I spent hours polishing the wood with care. For a gleaming finish, you must polish, sand, finish, polish, steel wool, polish, steel wool, and finally, wax the piece. I used Carpathian elm from Eastern Europe (available at Constantine's, a woodworking shop with locations in New York and Florida). Carpathian elm was the most widely used burl in classical (ie. 18th-century French) furniture making, and is considered by many to be the most

The dark pedestal at the foreground of the roombox nicely contrasts with the neutral colors of the furniture, carpeting, and bed dressing. More than 30 artisans created the small masterpieces that are now showcased within this highly realistic and comfortable setting.

beautiful. The burlwood gives the table a rich, warm contrasting color and the curves draw the eye into the room.

Judeé and I think of our rooms as a kind of painting, so we want to draw the viewer's eye into the setting. Curves and height variances help guide the eye around the composition. In the fore-

"I lose myself in the discovery of very special details every time I gaze upon its beauty. I aspire to their talent in my own work."

— Mary Fisher owner of "Midnight in the Pied-à-terre"

ground, for instance, the curved edges of the desk help draw the viewer's eye into the scene. Straight edges, on the other hand, tend to attract, then trap the gaze.

We also like to partially hide items in the room, which means that people will see things at the second and third viewing that they hadn't seen before. For instance, the beautiful painting by Johannes Landman at the foot of the bed can only be seen from certain angles, and the little Sylvia Mobley kitty that playfully scampers behind a curtain is almost completely concealed. We like the fact that the roombox makes variable impressions and contains surprises. Mary Fisher, owner of the roombox, says, "I lose myself in the discovery of very special details every time I gaze upon its beauty. I aspire to their talent in my own work."





Left: Treasures like Johannes Landman's painting to the left of the bed are artfully arranged to not be immediately obvious. The side wall was mirrored to accent the bed and make the room appear wider. Above: Marbleized accents, gilding, and Judeé Williamson's sumptuous trademark drapery make this roombox a credible boudoir.

Judeé and Nicole

"Midnight in the Pied-à-terre" was purchased by Mary Fisher at Chicago International 2000. We had met Mary at the Chicago International the previous year when she took one of our classes. Relatively new to the world of miniatures, Mary has become a good friend of ours. It really meant a lot to us when she said that she felt honored to own the piece.

Mary, who is HIV-positive and an AIDS activist, spoke on that topic at the 1992 Republican National Convention. Her popular autobiography, *My Name is Mary*, is one of her four books that we miniaturized for this roombox. (They can be seen on the table in the foreground.) We plan to include miniature versions of her books in all our future roomboxes as a tribute to her and others with AIDS. We will also be selling miniature copies of the books at shows, with proceeds to benefit AIDS organizations.

For us, the greatest joy we get from making a room is searching for, then being inspired by, the special pieces from the many talented, imaginative people working in miniatures. We collect and use their beautiful work in our rooms, which are made all the more beautiful because of them. Unique, well-crafted pieces draw viewers' eyes into the room and then hold that gaze. Our thanks to all the talented artists that have contributed to our project. 🏠

Judeé Williamson has been making miniatures for 30 years and Nicole Walton Marble for 27 years. They have been working together since 1986.

Contact: Williamson Walton Marble, 2627 Nicole Lane, Yuma AZ 85364; 520-783-1738; (nmarble@sprynet.com). Upcoming shows: Chicago International 2001, March 30-April 1; Dallas Dollhouse Miniature Event, May 11-13. Tom Bishop New York, September 1-2.

Artisans whose work is included in "Midnight at the Pied-à-terre":

- Wooden shell by Bob's Repair of Yuma, AZ
- Box painted by Griggs of Yuma, AZ
- Frame by Kathy Ray of Posters 'n Picture Frames, Yuma, AZ
- Fireplace, fender, and mirror from C&J Gallery
- Floor carpet and sofa fabric by Judith Adams
- Columns by Jim Coates
- Brass grillwork by Karen Stull
- Faux painting on columns and fireplace, parquet floor by Renéé Kutcher
- Working clock by Keith Bougourd of Small Time
- Ivory monkey from Betty Jean Houston of B.J.'s Orientals
- Outdoor scene with birds by Mary McGrath
- Vincennes porcelain and cups and saucers by The China Closet
- Silver by Pete Acquisto
- Trunk by Helen David
- Flowers and ivy on fireplace by Sandra Henry Wall
- Ivy on armoire by Marcy Jaffe
- Rose vase by Julie Hinkle of Poco Pots
- Bronze figure from Petite Elite
- Pedestal by Jack Blackham
- Porcelain vases and jars in armoire by Bespaq
- Porcelain cat by Sylvia Mobley
- Chandelier by Scott Hughes
- Wall sconces and candelabra by Phyllis Tucker
- Crystal stemware and decanter by Ferenc Albert
- Telephone by Brooke Tucker
- Painting by Johannes Landman
- Bowl by Andrea Fabrega
- White swan on blue bowl by Laurie O'Halloran Stone
- Door handles and drawer pulls by Ron Stetkewicz
- Granny square afghan by Theresa McKee
- Small red carpet from Art in Miniature
- Dessert by Mary Vander Dussen
- Silver tray by Enrique Quintanar
- Lace placemat and cherub wall brackets from Jeannetta Kendall
- French doors and window by Lawbre Dreidel - maker unknown
- Furniture, ivory Tang horse, and artist's mannequin by Nicole Walton Marble
- Everything else by Judeé Williamson