

# Miniature painting



What is a miniature painting? GUIDE-LINES TOWARD A DEFINITION OF A MINIATURE PAINTING There are many way of defining a miniature painting. Each culture has its own rules. Here we offer some Hilliard Society guidelines towards a definition of miniature painting and the criteria set by the Society:

- \* A high standard of draughtsmanship and composition.
- \* Mastery of miniature technique in chosen media and palette.
- \* No subject larger than life, portrait head no larger than 2" (5cm).
- \* Frames and mounts must be of high quality, clean and in keeping with the painting.

Each of these points is taken into consideration by the judges on Selection Day. The miniature by virtue of its detail and the finest execution of medium must stand up to the closest inspection, whilst at the same time hold its own with good composition and tonal balance when viewed from afar. A wide variety of media is used on surfaces such as paper, Ivorine, Ivorex and others from specialist suppliers. Works also include those of enamellers and engravers. It is the great variety of subjects, media and techniques which serve to keep miniature art alive and a constant delight.

In a top quality miniature every single detail is itself miniaturised, leading the eye down and down, so that with high magnification you may see the immaculate fineness of the brush strokes. A top quality miniature painting may take many hours to finish. The work requires the utmost concentration and very careful planning. Clean and dust-free conditions are essential where even one single grain of dust can present problems, when painting details are measured in parts of millimetres. [Caroline Hayes 1995]

The term miniature relates first of all to technique and identification and only secondly to the size of a painting. One can produce a 12-inch painting which is also a miniature. The size of a miniature is traditionally described as small enough to carry in a person's hand, pocket or bag. But this implies that sizes can vary enormously. Presumably, as long as the miniature technique is observed, a wall could be painted in miniature, even though the preciousness of the hand-held miniature would be lost. This technique is a specialized means of producing a perfect balance of color and detail in a series of thinly applied colors, intended to reflect light, within the boundary of a small frame. This does not mean that only traditional watercolor paint can be used. The technique produces the recognizable translucent and delicate look of the multilayered painting, but it can be applied using any of our present-day mediums. The word miniaturism, sometimes heard in the United States, is not a correct description of the discipline of the miniature. "miniature painting", or "the art of the miniature", is the correct description of this enchanting and fascinating branch of fine art. [Joan Willies] The Art of the Miniature A work of fine art in miniature is a particularly personal object that draws the viewer into an intimate, concentrated little world that is breathtaking in its execution. Every single detail is miniaturized... the scale of the subject matter, the brush strokes; so that only with high magnification can one behold the immaculate details of the artist's technique.

The term miniature relates first of all to technique and as an identification and only secondly to the size of a painting. The viewer must view the work at close range to obtain a full appreciation of both the image and technique. This technique is a specialized means of producing a perfect balance of color

and detail in a series of thinly applied layers of colors intended to reflect light, showing a high standard of design, and mastery of the chosen media and palette.

There is a feeling of preciousness associated with the art form due in part to the fact that it can usually be held in the palm of your hand and displays finely detailed work in brilliant, gem-like colors. [John Thompson (MPSGS) and Peter Waddell] \* For more comments on and definitions of miniature art visit [www. artofwildlife. com/miniature\\_definition. html](http://www.artofwildlife.com/miniature_definition.html) \* For The Park Lane Gallery article on the difference between a miniature and a small painting see here