Robert B. Off
Artist's Statement

I have enjoyed working alone with small objects since I was a child, hand-painting miniature soldiers with accurate colors, which I've continued to paint well into adulthood. When my daughter was five, I fabricated and created a miniature Victorian doll's house for her, thus beginning a parallel career/ avocation to my commercial/industrial real estate brokerage business. Both vocation and avocation have merged in the constructions/boxes I've made to the present.

I do not copy existing rooms in miniatures; rather, my rooms are like a contemporary installation in small scale, somewhat as an architect might render a space-in-the-making. Each piece is fabricated, measured, drawn, invented like sculpture. Each accessory – fireplaces, wallpaper, et al. – is purchased, but, as with Joseph Cornell's boxes, their arrangement and placement are designed by me. Light is the transformative quality in these rooms; the mood I prefer to emulate refers best to the dream-state of twilight, when shadows emerge from the light, and each object takes on a different quality, which I consider akin to surrealism.

The controlling of contrast is at the heart of the artistry. As in photography, when images start to evolve from the emulsion, the viewer can emulate this process both through light and from the skewed perspectives always included as the eye wanders from foreground to background into but not through half-open doors or walls implying different, magical space, while formally opening space to enhance the illusionism of each room. Mystery is implied after the comfort of the main – usually living – room. (The idea of a child hidden behind the door, listening in or peeking, may be implied; the child's perspective of adult life is usually implicit within the dream-like living room of adulthood). My aesthetic has been influenced and enhanced by the set designs and stage sets of Robert Edmond Jones, who integrated light and scenery into and within plays for live theatre. His dramatic use of light and integrative approach appears in my miniature rooms.

The rooms are designed and highly edited, limiting visual information to essentials, thus highlighting each and implying the rest. Figures are implied by their absence; the rooms want to be inhabited by the viewer. The rooms are generally formally balanced, beyond which is the unknown, the hidden, the surreal. Dimensional space is thus undermined by perspectival shifts. The sparse rooms imply more, which the viewer will bring, along with her/his own memories of "home". The artistic intent is spiritual, rather than materialist; I create through space, composition, and light.

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