

A collaborative masterpiece

Take a step into this one-of-a-kind miniature marvel created by Jimmy Landers and eight other exceptional miniature artisans.

By Lauren C. Nielsen



A major miniature project is coming to life, one small piece at a time. The latest miniature project by artisan Jimmy Landers is a collaborative piece between Jimmy and eight other miniature artisans. It is a two year long project that will be nearing completion in early 2018.

The finished piece will take form as a piece of furniture, similar to that of a hutch, with 9 rooms inside of it, elaborately decorated and fitted with some of the finest creations the miniature world has to offer. The cabinetry is being created and wired by Carl R Sahlberg of Creative Reproductions 2 Scale. Measuring over 6 feet tall, 6 ft 2 inches wide and over 2 ft deep, the project is nothing short of a marvel.

"It's a very massive piece," says Carl Sahlberg, collaborator and cabinet maker on the project, "Having gone to the Chicago International Show for many years, I've never seen another piece anywhere like this in public."

The nine rooms began as individual pieces which were then fully assembled, glued together, and electrified before having Jimmy add their detailed, final touches.

Backstory

Jimmy Landers and Carl Sahlberg, the main architects of this venture, have known each other for five years. When Jimmy was still new in the miniatures field, he talked with Nancy Vanhorn at Houseworks when on the search for a working ceiling fan. Nancy knew exactly who to contact: Carl Sahlberg.

Carl shares that Nancy will tell you that she also got him started in minia-

tures when she put him in touch with a vendor in China to get electrical components. Carl has now been working in the miniature industry for close to 10 years. He started out doing several different things and after three years, he realized that a lot of people didn't have much knowledge on electrical wiring. That is when he decided to focus solely on electrical for dollhouses.

"I focused on designing really neat,



TOP: Jimmy Landers next to the piece.

RIGHT: The masterpiece in progress.



ABOVE LEFT: Ceiling dome above the Grand Staircase.

ABOVE Chandelier in the library.

BELOW: A look into the library.

unique pieces, like the fluorescent shop light for a garage, theatre lights and spots, working ceiling fans with two speeds and a light independent of the fan itself. A lot of things were made just because people couldn't find them," he tells us.

Jimmy Landers, on the other hand, began building houses in miniature. The first ceiling fan he bought from Carl was installed in his Helmerich House, a Victorian Luxury Doll House, which eventually ended up in Texas. Jimmy's pieces are now all across the globe. One has gone to Germany, one to Philadelphia, one to Canada, and many more have ended up traveling great expanses.

His pieces have included the Colonial (Brandywine) dollhouse, the Victorian Helmerich House, the 1900 series of store fronts, the 1909 River Valley Hardware Store, the Flatiron building, and many others.

His latest piece, built as a custom hutch-like piece of furniture, will have a familiar name. When Carl told us the piece's name he said, "Jimmy has titled his piece 'The Sahlberg.' It was not my idea though. Jimmy titles all of his projects."

Starting the tour

As a furniture piece, the exterior had to be just as magnificent as the interior of

the project. Carl created the cabinetry, making a library table as the base for the project and then incorporating the nine rooms into a top cabinet that will have three glass doors on the front that open up. The library table includes an intricate front skirt cut out on Carl's CNC router.

Each of the nine rooms are 20 inches by 20 inches and individually fit into the hutch. "Nothing is completely finished," says Carl, "the basic frame is done, the ceilings and floors are done,"

but the rest of the detail work is still to come. Jimmy and Carl are slowly and precisely working on the project to get each section just right.

The Grand Foyer and Staircase

The three center sections include the Grand Foyer and the circular staircase with landings to access each of the two upper levels of the house. The Grand Foyer is inlaid with real marble flooring, and in the center sections alone, there are 22 sconces adorning the walls.





LEFT: Stained glass window in the downstairs of the library. **ABOVE** One of the bedrooms before the fireplace was installed. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A stunning view up through the Grand Foyer to the ceiling dome above.

The sconces were created by Linda Orleff of Lighting Bug Ltd. “I started with the wall sconces to make sure my idea of ‘elegant’ agreed with Jimmy’s. I’ve used a few of the same details in each fixture to give the design cohesiveness but tried to give each fixture their own unique flair. Jimmy is very easy to collaborate with because he respects that his artists are good at what they do and allows creative freedom,”

Linda states. “The creative freedom is actually part of the challenge in making these lights,” she continues, “Designing custom lights tends to be very time consuming.”

The 2-tier chandelier for the grand foyer was another of Linda’s creations. “We’re not involved in lighting installations and rarely get to see them in the rooms they were made for unless customers send us pictures. It was quite

a treat to see the grand foyer lit up at the show in April.”

The Grand Staircase will be a focal point of the project, winding its way up from the foyer to the second and third floors. Currently, there are two large holes in the ceilings of the first and second floors, just waiting for the stair-

BELOW A stunning look up through the ceiling of the ambitious two-story library.



case to be ready to install. The staircase will contain hundreds of balusters winding up it. The railings for the Grand Staircase will be designed and laser cut by the talented Terry Harville.

The Library

To the right of the Grand Foyer and climbing up to the second floor, is the Library. A masterpiece in itself, the Library has wall-to-wall bookshelves and paneling all made out of a beautiful cherry wood as well as a gorgeous parquet floor.

The Library's 16 wall sconces and 2-tier chandelier were also designed by Linda Orleff of Lighting Bug, Ltd.: "For the library chandelier, his only requests were that it be two tiers, four inches in diameter for the lower level, three inches for the upper level, have eight lights on each level and a heavy black chain from the ceiling. It took me three tries to come up with a design that I think has the presence for such a large room," Linda says.

In addition to the Library's sconces and chandelier, some lighting comes through the beautiful, custom-made 10-inch high stained glass windows created by Barbara Sabia. For the window designs, "Jimmy sends me pictures of the rooms, and I come up with designs I feel work with the spaces," Barbara tells us, "I make the pieces, send them over to

Jimmy, and he installs them. He always gives me the specs needed to fit and I go from there."

This is Barbara's fifth collaboration with Jimmy. For his last project, she designed 28 stained glass windows. "Each build is always a new challenge," she adds, "Seeing the end result makes everything worthwhile."

Jimmy designed a special molding for the library. Then, he sent the design to Steve Goode in California who then made custom knives to cut the moldings for the Library. Steve shares, "Jimmy sent me a piece of molding and asked to have it replicated in 1/12 scale. I made a drawing of it and reduced all dimensions by 1/12. Then, I transferred these dimensions to grind a blade that could then be hand grind blended to make a cutter."

The Library's bookshelves, which take up the back wall of the first level and all three walls of the second level, will hold over 2500 books total!

The Remaining Rooms

To the left of the Grand Foyer is the dining room and directly above it, sits the Parlor. The two remaining rooms on the third level are designated as bedrooms. Each of these four rooms have special molded designs for the ceilings, wooden floors, and cozy fireplaces. You will also notice that each



TOP: Creating the details for the table to hold the house. **ABOVE** The intricate placement of wiring throughout the house.



room has sconces, and by the end of the project will have stained glass windows to bring light in. Another three chandeliers are being created by Frank Crescente to be hung within the build.

The Wiring

"The most difficult part of the piece," Carl shares, "is the final wiring, with the majority of the wiring going on the flat back that goes against the wall."

Just like in a real house, Carl has to make sure that this piece is wired properly and up to code. "What I do in actual wiring is no different than what's been done in the past," he tells us, "Two wires that run to a power supply have to be negotiated through the structure to go to each of the lights for them to light up."



LEFT: Gorgeous wallpaper and crown molding make this room exceptional.

The whole job took me a few months, between creating the piece, the casting process and finishing it up. I sent the pieces out to Jimmy, he installed them. I love Jimmy's work, which is why I'm a part of it and I look forward to his next idea."

The crown moldings, seen throughout the house, are made to Jimmy's specifications. "Jimmy doesn't believe in the sticks you get for crown molding," says Carl Sahlberg, "His are always a good inch, inch and a quarter around the ceiling with door trim made up of several smaller molding pieces."

When in the Grand Foyer or on the staircase, looking up gives one quite a spectacular view. The ceiling on the center room of the third level holds an intricate, custom-designed ceiling dome in stained glass. Barbara Sabia designed this piece in addition to the stained glass windows. "The ceiling dome took eight days," Barbara shares, "The ceiling domes are my newest pieces in the past two years. The first challenge was how to make one in 1/12 scale. Once I worked out the logistics, all has been fine. They are, though, my greatest challenges to date!"

Finishing Up

The Sahlberg still has a little ways to go, but Jimmy and Carl both hope that the piece will be finished by April. When finished, The Sahlberg will be a masterful, museum-quality piece of furniture. **DHM**

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The real challenge is finding the best way of bringing the wires to all of the fixtures so that they always work. Soldering all the joints to create the best connection is the real secret.

Another unique part of the wiring is that the piece will be lit with a DC power source instead of an AC transformer. "The DC power source works better," Carl notes, "It has a constant current which makes all the lights last longer and being direct current, allows one to use LEDs and newer electronic components such as remote controls. We have over 500 LED bulbs and each of the stained glass windows are illuminated using an electro-illuminating panel (EI-panel)."

All of the wiring will be concealed within the walls. Some fixtures including table lamps will plug into wall outlets. All of the fixtures are custom-made, not your standard items. This ensures the quality of workmanship that Jimmy is striving for in this piece.

"This piece is very unique," Carl remarks, "because of the number of artisans working with Jimmy to get all of the fine finishings and details just right. It's a collaboration with a lot of people and this has never happened before."

Special Touches

Throughout the piece, there are little

special touches that Jimmy Landers requested to make the project even more unique. This is where several artists' talents came in to play.

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Ron Stetkewicz does miniature machining, mold making, and brass casting of small parts in his studio in Upstate New York. He created most of the custom brass pieces for this project. "Jimmy Landers requested that the pieces be something new that no one else would have. So, he got an original solid brass design," Ron begins, "I created a unique brass door handle for Jimmy's project, a French handle with an elaborate back plate, matched for each door he needed." He also created the unique custom bracket to support the brass rail around the library.

"These specific parts were cast and soldered together," he continues, "And then finished with a bright polish."