

# World in miniature

If you have an eye for detail, a steady hand and bags of patience, painting in miniature might be your next step forward, advises Tracy Hall

I began painting in miniature two years ago and have been completely captivated ever since, spending every spare moment practising and learning more about this age old art form. A miniature cannot be rushed; quite the reverse is true as the whole process is extremely detailed and completely absorbing. Although not essential, miniature paintings are sometimes viewed with a magnifying glass for good reason; it is often only then that you can fully appreciate the intricate brushwork as you are drawn closer and closer into their tiny world. Miniatures are not just little paintings – they are fine art on a very small scale.

## Notes on materials

**Watercolour** I find watercolour perfect for miniature work as it dries quickly and is very versatile. I usually use Winsor & Newton Artists' watercolour and work with both transparent and opaque colours.

**Brushes** Contrary to popular belief, a brush with only a few hairs is of little use for miniature work. You need a brush that holds a good amount of paint and keeps a very fine point for as long as possible. I use short-handled Kolinsky sable brushes.

**Surface** There are many suitable surfaces for miniature work available today but, whatever you use, it must be smooth. Any texture will detract from your



▲ Picasso, *Lucky Cockerel*, watercolour, 2x3.1in. (6x4.5cm)



▲ *Golden Pheasants*, watercolour, 2x3.3in. (6x8.25cm)



painting, I use Crescent hot-pressed watercolour board (only available from the US; try [www.dickblick.com](http://www.dickblick.com)) and Arches hot-pressed paper, which is widely available in the UK. A new surface also worth trying is Avon Smooth from Polymer's Plus ([www.poymerplus.co.uk](http://www.poymerplus.co.uk); or see the advertisement in Marketplace, page 64).

▲ Young Otters, watercolour, 2x3in. (5x7.5cm)



▲ Anglo Nubian, watercolour, 2x3.1in. (6x4.5cm)



▲ Inca Tern, watercolour, 1x2.6in. (4.5x6cm)

## TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

- To make a fine point on your brush, roll it gently on a piece of kitchen roll before applying it to the painting. This also prevents accidentally overloading the brush with too much paint.
- To check the proportions of your drawing or painting, hold the work up to a mirror. It is surprising what the eye can pick up from a different viewpoint. It is useful to check your progress in this way as you work.
- When painting hair or fur, remember to keep your brushstrokes in the direction of the hair growth. Working in many layers, starting at the bottom, will give depth and a natural look.
- Remember to rest your eyes periodically. Look out of the window and focus on something in the distance for a change – and have a stretch while you are at it!