

DAWN TEFFT

In the House of the House of Miniatures

South Carolina Parlor, 1800s.

A mirror over the fireplace reflects the museum viewer, large, owner of all dominions, taken backwards into the velvet past where she rules with a velvet fist. Rules the stuffed chairs, the sweeping curtains, the glimpse in a side room of panoramic Jesus, who, being meek, can never really preside over a silver tea service. The viewer has not been banished. She can see herself in this room.

Shaker Kitchen, 1800s.

Chair, chair, chair. Table. Pots.

French Hall, 1500.

Long brick hall. Tall windows. Forever curtains—red velvet stream. Gold plates and cups. Brick floor. Brick walls. Fireplace is key. The center—a long wood table. That is to say, sufficient to hold many warring men.

Massachusetts Living Room and Kitchen, 1675-1700.

Fire is everything. Hooks, long handles, big black pots, tongs, iron, settee.

Japanese Interior (Traditional).

A low table surrounded by cushions—one corner of a long room. Opposite of table, a decorative screen captures flowering trees. A panel spreads mountains across the room. A sliding door opens table to garden. Stone pathways wind through trees, flowers, pruned bushes, other stones. Outside, there is no room.

New England Bedroom, 1750-1850.

Several flower vases, a daily decoration, a fragrant chore. Two small windows squeeze light down over the wall, away from the bed. Candles everywhere. On the mantelpiece, two ceramic hunting dogs, locked on invisible prey. Ship in a bottle. On the bed sheets, ships sail endlessly without falling off.

Pennsylvania Drawing Room, 1800s.

Chairs sit stuffed and waiting, trying to hold up under the chandelier. Mauve curtains echo mauve walls echo mauve carpet. If a visitor opened a bureau drawer,

she might find a note in the middle one: “Breathe deeply.” If there was nothing worthwhile to do. If the viewer will turn her head much to the left, she will see a side room filled with an Oriental collection. Jade, bronze Vishnu. Buddha is one of many things.

Pennsylvania Drawing Room, 1800s.

Fire screen. Screen the fire. Flowers in needle point. Fire screened.

French Salon, 1660-1700.

Three chandeliers laugh above two large white women bearing stone thighs, stone breasts, stone burdens on stone shoulders. Dishes decorate the cabinets, silver in the light singing through a wall of windows. All dominated by a portrait of a king.

New York City Parlor, 1800s.

Roses. Hydrangeas. Under glass. Clock. Under glass. Bust of anonymous woman.

French Provincial Bedroom, 1700s.

The door opens to a large wardrobe, a birdcage nestling its bird, a mirror, brush, and washbasin (ceramic, stone?). Turn around to see a crucifix above a bed hidden from the entrant’s view.

Massachusetts Dining Room, 1800s.

Dinner’s laid—in crystal. Dinner’s laid in crystal on white table cloth. Snow crystals the windows and makes banks of crystal, too.

Gothic English Catholic Church, 1275-1300.

Saints in colored glass float. Blue panel insets in brown and gold frames arch to meet. Three lamps on chains drop half the length of church. On a tiled floor, candles march tall as people. Width-wise, faded tapestry tells a story of virgin and child. A golden cross towers. Under and away from this, wooden benches on which to kneel.