

**Miniature madams grace gallery**

**They are so small that if you blink, you might miss them.**

Miniature masterpieces in ivory, enamel, porcelain and papier-mache are going on display at the Smithsonian institution in Washington.

Portraits embellished with pin-head sized pearls and gold paint and glossy with egg tempura are among the tiny treasures on show.



bony-coloured egg tempera and 24 carat gold enrich inch-wide art

Ranging in size from a few millimetres to the length of a finger, most have to be viewed with a magnifying glass.

On display is an image of Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Anastasia Nicholaevna Romanoff.

Swathed in white fur and studded with diamonds she is a mere a 2.5in (6.35cm) by 3in (7.62cm) high.

Anastasia is one of more than 1,000 tiny artworks on view at the Smithsonian's Third Exhibition of Fine Arts in Miniature at the Ripley Center International Gallery in Washington.

The smallest work in the exhibition is a filigreed silver box topped with a magnifying glass.

Inside are three drop-sized ivory discs decorated with watercolours of India.

The tradition of painting miniature dates back to medieval era when artists illuminated religious texts that they transcribed.



Brilliant colours and intricate detail are characteristic of miniatures

The bright, gem-like colours and immense detail of miniatures make all the squinting on the part of the viewer worthwhile.

Before the invention of photography, miniature depictions of significant others were worn in lockets or kept in pockets.

All the pieces in the exhibition are for sale, and the prices range from \$100 to \$5,000.