

Reflections on Scale

The relationship between scale and functionality raises interesting questions when working with a non-conventional format. Is the primary focus on scale, and making the book small, or on it being large enough to still function as a book, to be handled and read with the naked eye '...the process of creating small things are not simply technologies for reducing scale but also imply a corresponding exaggeration of content' (Mack, 2007:1).

The production of miniature books is challenging in terms of craftsmanship: it 'has always taxed craftsmen to the extreme and compelled them to give of their very best under most difficult and challenging circumstances' (Bondy, 1981:3). Anecdotally, this can be seen in an exhibition catalogue of miniature books, which includes reflections from the 35 designers who created work for this exhibition curated by Anne and David Bromer, on creating a miniature book. In many instances, these were the bookbinders' first attempts at working in miniature, and the technical precision and attention to detail are frequently mentioned: 'the binder is Gargantua fondling a mouse', Arthur W. Johnson (Bromer and Bromer, 1987), or Sally Lou Smith's 'binding a miniature book is like binding a normal sized book under a reducing glass. No step is omitted: the materials are the same. But everything is scaled down except the binder's fingers'.

However, while the format of a miniature perhaps forces an initial focus on scale, it is not the only factor, or as Mack states, 'the description of the miniature as an object of allure, or of awe, is far from exhausting its potential significance' (Mack, 2007:1). In the case of this project, producing work for a dolls' house, raised wider questions both around the relationship between form and content in a miniature book, but also through the positioning of the books within a dolls' house, it raised question around culture: in particular around toys, gender and the relationship between books and toys, as the miniature books became objects on display in the Dollhouse.