Feel Big Live Small Exhibition
NYC’s apexart gallery gathers a collection of meticulously crafted miniature dioramas for its newest show
by Gabriella Garcia
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Living in NYC is enough to make anyone feel small, with lofty skyscrapers (and egos) towering over the city streets. Luckily TriBeCa's apexart gallery is inviting visitors to experience what it's like to rise above with its newest exhibit "Feel Big Live Small," featuring a collection of meticulously crafted miniature dioramas, opening 18 March 2015. The show brings together work by some of the world's most steady hands, including Matthew Albanese, Joe Fig and CH favorite Thomas Doyle—all of whom approach the medium from a broad range of perspectives.
Fig, for instance, brings viewers into the very personal spaces of some of the most recognized names in the art world—including Chuck Close and Jackson Pollock—with his perfect small-scale replicas of their art studios. For this exhibit Fig invites viewers into his own world with his "Self Portrait" diorama, which details his personal workplace all the way down to his dog’s food bowl. His work is truly a study in intimacy, magnifying a sensation of voyeurism as we snoop the artist's private life.

On the other end of the spectrum, Citizen Brick gives Breaking Bad’s Walter White the LEGO treatment, recreating the character’s infamous meth lab totally out of LEGO bricks. Based out of Chicago, Citizen Brick makes custom LEGO-compatible pieces, such as tattooed figurines and a strip club building set, that give the favorite children's construction toy a very adult makeover.
Lori Nix and Kathleen Gerber imagine a post-apocalyptic world with their collaborative piece, which details a dusty abandoned space observatory that has been left to rot. It's a peek into a possible future in which humans can no longer tend to superfluous inquiry—that is, if humans still exist. The observatory walls crumble as nature crawls in through the window, with scattered Cold War-era equipment suggesting that perhaps the war wasn't so cold after all.

Alice Bartlett puts a cheeky spin on the current nail art trend by felting her fingertips with model train grass, on which tiny people gather for a park rendezvous. Daisy Tainton approaches the task from a Victorian "oddities" realm, using insects to depict very human matters. Her Kafkaesque "Suicide Beetle" puts the insect at the end of a rope in a bedroom filled with spilt wine and pill bottles. Though the diorama is certainly morbid, something about the plush antique bedroom and miniature props make the whole scene almost adorable.
Tracey Snelling looks to Vargas Llosa’s novel "The Bad Girl" for inspiration, depicting a blighted urban block that hides secrets within its walls. Setting a scene that seems to be straight out of DTLA after dark, Snelling uses looping video to create an effect of live action behind the windows, weaving together a shadowy story of forlorn lovers in a tumultuous relationship.

While many dismiss dioramas and miniatures as child’s play best used for grade school projects and dollhouses, "Feel Big Live Small" reminds us that miniatures have a rich history (dating back to the Egyptian tombs) and an incredible importance in the modern world, especially within the realms of architecture and filmmaking. The gallery's selections pack a fantastic punch, helping us reflect on our own lives as we view the world from the outside in.

"Feel Big Live Small" is on exhibit at apexart (291 Church St, NYC) through 16 May 2015.

Images by Gabriella Garcia

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