



THE
MASSA
RULE
BOOK

A guide to making miniature art
which adheres to the
parameters stipulated by the
Miniature Art Society
of South Africa

Introduction

The Miniature Art Society of South Africa (MASSA), was formed in February 1992 by Charmian Kennealy and Jeff Sochen, who brought together a group of artists interested in the challenge of working "in the small".

Throughout the ages miniaturism has been part of the art culture of almost every society, a fact which is evident in all major art museums of the world.

Working in the small has always held a fascination for the creative person. There is something very intimate and personal in holding a perfect piece of miniature art, whether it be a portrait, landscape, still life or sculpture, in the palm of one's hand.

It presents a challenge to the artist to attempt to reproduce the impact of a far larger work in the smallest area possible. It requires a disciplined approach in technique, with an emphasis on attaining as much detail as possible.

This requires a good knowledge of appropriate subject matter, size, techniques, art materials, other helpful equipment and framing. Also important, are the rules and parameters set out by the World Federation of Miniaturists (WFM) of which MASSA is a member.

The MASSA Rule Book endeavours to assist all members, especially newcomers, with relevant information, rules and advice in the creation of lasting (archival) miniature art, which remains true to the spirit and parameters to which the society adheres.

Size

There are two criteria to consider regarding the permissible size for a miniature, be it a two dimensional piece such as a painting or drawing, or a three dimensional piece such as a sculpture.

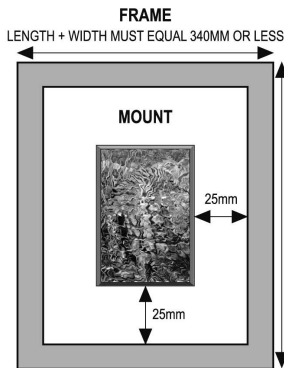
Firstly, the subject matter that is depicted must adhere to the internationally accepted "ONE-SIXTH SCALE RULE".

THIS MEANS THAT ANYTHING DEPICTED MUST BE ONE-SIXTH LIFE SIZE OR LESS. For example, a human head approximately 230mm high, may not be rendered more than 38mm, or if a rose or flower is

approximately 75mm across its widest part, it may not be rendered more than 13mm, but it can be rendered smaller.

Small subject matter not lending themselves to the one-sixth scale rule such as insects or tiny flowers may, at the discretion of the jury, be acceptable as long as the work retains the "spirit of miniaturism". So too, should non-representational work such as an abstract artwork, be in harmony with the delicacy of a miniature.

Secondly, the overall size of the artwork is restricted. This means, in the case of a framed artwork, the maximum area including the outside measurement of the frame may not exceed 28900sqmm. If one is using a square format, this would translate to 170mm x170mm.



For a rectangular format, either multiply the length and width to arrive at the sqmm area or another simple way to work out the correct area ratio is to add the outside length and width of the framed artwork together and if the number is 340mm or less, then the artwork is within permissible size.

TABLE OF MINIATURE SIZES which fall within the permitted sqmm area.

170 x 170mm	= 28900sqmm
175 X 165mm	= 28900sqmm
180 x 161mm	= 28900sqmm
185 x 156mm	= 28900sqmm
190 x 152mm	= 28900sqmm
195 x 148mm	= 28900sqmm
199 x 145mm	= 28855sqmm
205 x 140mm	= 28700sqmm

Table shows only maximum sizes. Frames with smaller dimensions will obviously be within permissible specifications

Though not a rule, it is suggested that if the framed artwork has a mount, the mount is not permitted to be wider than 25mm all around. Exceptions can be made as long as it balances with the artwork. For example, a very small artwork may have a wider mount.

For a three dimensional piece, the sculpture in its entirety, including the base, should fall within a 170mm cube or a volume equal to a 170mm cube or smaller.

Subject Matter

MASSA accepts a wide variety of subject matter. Generally speaking, most imagery or genres which can be painted 'large' can be painted in miniature. This includes for example, landscape or seascape, exterior and interior scenes, still life, floral, portraiture and the human figure, wildlife - marine and land animals, birds and insects, medieval, fantasy, mythical, abstract, historical or religious themes.

The society encourages its members to take their own photographs and to gather reference which is not subject to copyright.

No imagery found in magazines, books, newspapers or from any printed source, as well as the Internet, such as Google, Pinterest or social media is permissible and will be rejected if discovered to be so.

If a copyrighted image is used, written permission from the copyright holder is required if challenged by MASSA.

No artwork will be accepted for exhibition where the subject matter is deemed to contain obscenity, implied obscenity or inappropriate nudity. For example, children depicted inappropriately. No themes will be accepted which contain political, cultural, religious or lifestyle references which may be deemed critical, prejudiced or offensive to others.

Media and Techniques

MASSA believes in making 'Archival' miniature art. It involves a host of considerations in the progressive steps involved in making miniature art.

The spirit of 'Archival' art and framing is one of

stability, longevity and preservation. Like a valuable or sentimental piece of jewellery which is designed and made to last indefinitely, the best miniature art can be as valuable or sentimental and should be crafted with the same spirit.

Therefore when choosing suitable media or materials, one should be considering it in terms of its 'archival' qualities. Good quality brands of paints and art materials which are stated as being 'archival' or 'acid free' are recommended. They are products which are manufactured to withstand ageing issues such as fading, yellowing, brittleling and cracking.

Most media or art techniques available to artists are acceptable with a few exceptions.

Those which are acceptable are as follows:

Paint based media such as:

Oils and Acrylics, Watercolour, Gouache, Egg Tempera, Enamel, Ink etc.

Drawing based media such as:

Pencil, Graphite, Charcoal, Conte chalk, Pastels, Coloured Pencils, Pen and Ink etc.

One can also combine any compatible combination of 'Mixed Media' as well.

Printing techniques such as:

Etching, Dry-Point Etching, Lino-Cut or Wood-Cut Printing - A series of prints may be hand-pulled by the artist and each edition marked as a number of that series eg. 1/10. No further prints from the original are permitted. Thus making it a limited edition.

Sgraffito - Scratching onto scratchboard.

Calligraphy - For example, the miniature illumination of a page or poem.

Collage - Pre-prepared hand painted elements may be cut up and assembled. No 'cuttings' from magazines or such is permitted.

Porcelain painting

Three dimensional media and techniques such as:

Woodcarving and sculpture in relief and in the round. Any suitable, lasting, non-fugitive material may be used.

Media and techniques which are not permitted are as follows:

Any fugitive media - Certain colours in ink and watercolour ranges. Ball-point pen and 'Koki' pen.

Non-durable material - In the case of sculpture, unsuitable materials which will crack, crumble or fail in a short space of time are not permitted.

Any photographic, digital or darkroom techniques - Photographs are permitted for reference purposes only and not as final artwork.

No crafts - For example, beadwork, pottery and handmade craft, which is generally mass produced and not considered 'fine art'.

Over-painting - This is a technique whereby an image is 'printed' onto either paper or canvas and the artist then proceeds to paint the same image over it using the 'under-image' as a template so that the final result looks like it has been hand-painted.

Illegal materials or media - Ivory or parts of endangered animals such as rhino horn or whalebone etc are not permitted and if found without a valid permit may be in danger of prosecution.

Artwork Surfaces and Supports

Historically, miniature art has been made on a large variety of surfaces. Before the advent of the modern manufacture of art materials, all materials used by artists had to be made by hand or found.

Materials such as ivory, whalebone or vellum (made from calf skin) were used, to name but a few. Ivory is now prohibited and in the case of other materials, is either hard to find, prohibitively expensive, not 'archival' or difficult and temperamental to work with.

Wood and metal have been used as a support as well and although wood is still popular with a lot of artists, it is important for South African artists to consider that wood is restricted by customs in some countries such as the USA (the wood can harbour wood-boring insects and eggs which are foreign to their shores) if one intends to exhibit or send artwork overseas.

Metal is not considered as a practical or consistent support although some modern artists have taken to painting on the inside of pocket watches for example

or other found items, as a way to personalise their artwork even more.

Modern art surfaces and supports are far superior in guaranteeing a consistent result for the artist. There are now a wide variety of acid free products which MASSA encourages its members to use because of their 'archival' qualities.

Two popular 'archival' products are Ivorine and Polymin, which are both synthetically manufactured supports made to simulate the surface of ivory and is used extensively in miniature oil painting and even as a support for other media such as watercolour, graphite etc. Ivorine is more difficult to acquire but MASSA imports Polymin, which it makes available to its members.

Polymin is supplied in A5 sheets and needs to be properly prepared before use. The sheet of polymin should be hand-washed using a small amount of dishwashing liquid to remove any substances which may impede the artist's media. Thereafter, the sheet should be carefully dried. Finally, a little talcum powder should be rubbed onto the matt side (which is the working surface) of the polymin.

Although historically vellum was made traditionally from calf skin, modern 'synthetic' vellum is made from a vegetable product and is also popular as a support.

Many artists painting in oil prefer to make their own 'canvases'. Using an appropriate acid free backing such as fashion board, the artist adheres fine cotton or linen hankerchief or even silk. This must be of sufficiently fine weave that the texture of the material simulates canvas weave, but in miniature. The 'canvas' is then primed with an acrylic based primer to prevent the material from rotting. Care should be taken to prime in thin coats to prevent the material weave from filling in.

Artists working in watercolour, gouache and ink have a wide variety of suitable acid free options. It is not suitable however, to use a rough textured watercolour paper, as the texture will make fine detail much more difficult.

Instead, it is encouraged to find a finer textured or even smooth acid free paper or board which will aid

with detail and is also in line with the 'spirit of miniaturism' which in essence means to reduce as much as possible down proportionately in your miniature.

Other supports such as fashion board and illustration board which have a hard-pressed smooth finish but with just the right amount of 'tooth' are popular with those working in dry mediums such as pencil, graphite, conte chalk and pastels etc. Most of these boards and papers are acid free but if unsure, it is best to enquire or choose a product which you know is acid free.

Art Equipment

For the newcomer or beginner, the first thing to consider is setting up a 'corner' as miniaturists affectionately like to call the place that they sit and wile away many hours, both day and night, making their art.

Typically, this involves a spacious desk with good drawer space so that the artist can have as much of their equipment within convenient arms length. The desk or working surface should be situated in a room with good natural light in a space which cultivates an inviting, warm, intimate atmosphere.

When working at night, good artificial 'white' light is essential to keep the artist's work consistent, whether working during the night or day. A powerful directional light or angle-poised lamp with a 'daylight' globe is recommended.

Most miniaturists prefer to work sitting at a table and therefore a table easel should be used. It is not recommended to work, pouring over the artwork, but rather have the artwork mounted upright, face to face as it were, with the seated artist. This position minimises distortion and also provides the best body posture for comfort if working long hours. Table easels are available in many different designs and configurations and it is up to the individual artist to find what works the best for them.

The next piece of equipment to consider, and again this is the artist's preference, is an appropriate magnifier. Even if one has 20/20 vision or even exceptionally sharp eyesight, using a magnifier to assist with the fine detail required of miniaturism is

essential. As with table easels, many types of magnifiers are available, from a self-supporting magnifying lamp which has a magnifying glass surrounded by a light which illuminates the work directly, to conventional self-supporting magnifiers. The society recommends using a head-mounted magnifier. The advantage being firstly, that both hands are free, and secondly that the magnifier moves with the artist's head, as one shifts from reference to the artwork, making it much more comfortable to work.

Brushes are an important and intimate part of a painter's art equipment. As with most other art products there are many old, new and upcoming brush ranges available to the artist. It is an intimate and subjective business choosing a set of brushes or as it is with many artists starting a lifelong collection. Many types of brushes made from many types of material are available. Sable hair brushes are regarded by most as the best one can acquire, but remain prohibitively expensive to most. It is recommended by many artists practicing both oils and watercolours, to reserve sable hair or high quality brushes for watercolours and water based media, as the acidic nature of the oil medium tends to shorten the life of even the best brushes.

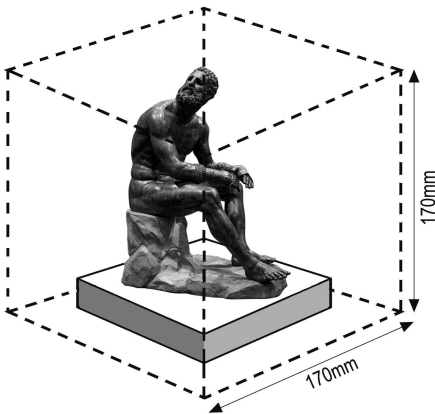
Although hog bristle brushes are used with 'large' oil painting, softer smaller brushes are more appropriate when painting miniatures. Typically, brush sizes used by miniaturists range from a 'large' No. 2 used to fill in large areas to No. 000 used for small detail. Extremely small size brushes, as small as 0/10 are manufactured, but hard to find and available only if imported. It is recommended to acquire a range of brush types ranging from a flat 'chisel' point shape through to the conventional sharp pointed brush. Other art equipment and tools such as a cutting board and craft knife, for example and many others, too many to mention, are an essential part of any artist's process of making art and subject to each individual's subjective choice of what works best for them.

Sculpture

As with other genres, sculpture or making art in three dimensions in miniature requires a specialised skill set, tools and equipment. Artists working on a small scale have found that making their own tools and equipment sometimes is better than what can be purchased. Also, tools from entirely different fields can sometimes be very effective, for example, dentistry or jewellers tools.

Well crafted sculpture should be made using quality, permanent materials which are compatible to each other, both structurally as well as aesthetically.

A base must be included with the sculpture and is compulsory. The base should be as important as the sculpture and not an afterthought.



The sculpture including its base may not exceed a 170mm cube or a volume equivalent to that in size.

Any subject matter should not be portrayed larger than the 1/6 rule referred to under the heading 'Size' earlier in this book.

As with printing, sculptors may make a series of casts of an individual piece. Usually, each cast or the best of the series is then handworked individually thereby essentially making that cast an unique artwork.

Similar to printing, if a series of casts are made of an original, each cast should be clearly marked on the base, as being a specific number of a total series. For example, 1/10. The original should then be destroyed

or no further casts taken of that piece. If more casts are taken of the original, then those casts will be considered reduced to craft status (mass produced) and not fine art.

Art Demonstrations and Exhibitions

From time to time MASSA organises demonstrations in various aspects of miniaturism. These demonstrations are valuable sources of information for the newcomer and even serve as a means to exchange ideas between seasoned artists.

MASSA also sends out newsletters periodically with important information, as well as notices to relevant exhibitions held by other miniature societies etc, both national and international, where artists may want to attempt to exhibit their work.

These all provide a rich platform for all MASSA members to learn and grow as artists.

Signature

MASSA requires that all artwork submitted for exhibition must have a signature. The signature is subject to judging and if not executed properly, may result in the piece being rejected.

When signing your work, it is important to remember that a signature should be well placed, as not to be obtrusive. It should be legible and also reduced to be proportionate to the image.

The artist's signature may be followed in brackets with an acronym (sometimes more than one) for special status such as membership or associateship. Though not a rule, it is recommended that the artist dates the artwork with, at least, the year it was completed. This is useful for historical purposes and will help to make the artwork more valuable over time.

Pricing

MASSA takes 30% of the price of any artwork which is sold on exhibition. Any resulting artwork commissions from the exhibition will incur a 10% commission to MASSA. Note that the percentage of commission may change from time to time.

Judging

All MASSA members are invited to submit their work for judging and if accepted, to exhibit their work at the annual MASSA exhibition, which is open to the public.

To be allowed to participate, a member must have all subscriptions paid in full. Only South African residents are eligible for MASSA membership.

An artwork may be exhibited only once and if not sold cannot be re-submitted for exhibition for the following MASSA exhibition.

During assessment, each artwork is judged and rated according to certain set criteria. These are:

Quality of Framing (neatness both front and back)

Glass (clear glass only)

Mounts (clean, cut straight with no overcuts)

Impact and Originality

Composition

Perspective

Detail (fineness of brushwork/markings)

Observation

Tonal Values

Overall Size

The 1/6 Rule

Subject Matter and Media (appropriate subject matter and prohibited media)

Signature

Any further prohibitive factor such as discussed in this book

Criteria listed above are judged strictly and without exception. No excuses or re-submissions will be accepted. If an artwork is rejected, the artist can correct the errors (if possible) and only re-submit the piece for the following exhibition.

Framing

The framing of artwork should be considered with the same 'archival' attention to detail as the artwork itself.

It is recommended that the artist sources a framer who will pay attention to the smaller tolerances required in making miniature frames and mounts. A narrower frame adds to the delicacy of the artwork. Complete frames which include frame, clear glass, acid free mountboard and backing board are also available from MASSA.

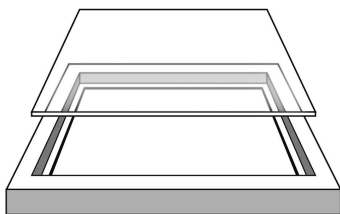
Criteria to consider when framing is as follows:

- All two dimensional artwork must be framed. No small stretched canvases or block mounted artwork is permitted. Only traditional icons, which are painted on wood are acceptable unframed.
- The width of the frame moulding is restricted to 25mm or less for mounted artwork and 30mm or less for frames without a mount (such is suitable for oil or acrylic paintings).
- If the framed artwork has a mount, it has to be behind clear glass.
- No segmented metal frames. Avoid cheap photo / commercial / free standing and segmented metal frames. the only metal frames allowed are those made especially as pendant hanging frames for miniatures which are imported from the United Kingdom.
- Although wooden frames are permitted by MASSA, if one intends to enter any artwork internationally, it is wise to check for any restrictions ie. the USA where no wooden frames are permitted.
- No badly manufactured frames (chips, bad joints etc)
- No non-reflective glass (only clear glass is permitted)
- Coloured or non-archival mountboards are not permitted.
- No handcut or overcuts on mountboards.
- Any mountboards which are not straight in the frame will be rejected.

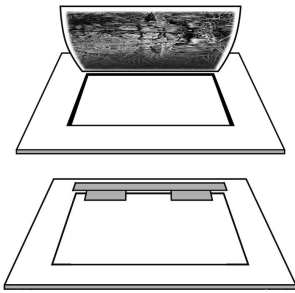
- No screw-eyes and D-rings which are inappropriately large in size.
- Only seven strand copper wire is permitted for hanging.
- Untidy or badly cut backing boards will be rejected.
- No dust inside the frame will be permitted.
- Tape which is not acid free is not permitted.
- Labels should be cut out straight and neat and adhered firmly to the back of the frame with acid free double-sided tape.

All materials used in framing should be acid free. Tape, backing sheets, fillers, mounts etc. No cello tape or masking tape is permitted.

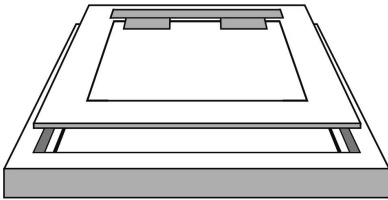
Once the artist has chosen the appropriate colour and style for a frame, which suits the artwork, the following steps are recommended to complete the process of archival framing:



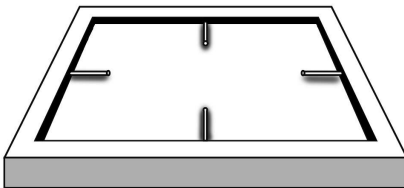
- Remove the glass from the frame.
- Wash glass both sides with dishwashing liquid to remove dirt etc.
- Rinse thoroughly with clean water, dry and polish the glass, taking care to remove all dust. (It must be stressed that great attention and care should be taken with the removal of dust that could be trapped between the artwork and glass - Failure to pay attention to this could result in the piece being rejected.)
- Place the glass back in the frame which has been placed upside down. Care should be taken to make sure the glass is a snug fit and does not rattle around in the frame.
- Keep checking the glass and frame for any visible dust which may have been overlooked or which has been attracted to the glass or frame from static electricity.



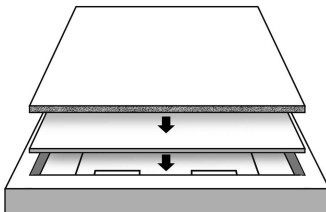
- Position your artwork behind the mount and tape it in position with acid free tape (eg. linen tape, bookbinding tape or Micropore surgical tape)



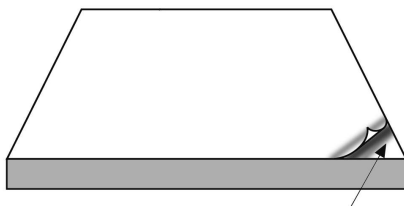
- Place the artwork and mount into the frame behind the glass.
- Place acid free backing board behind the artwork and mount.



- Pin in place with framer's staples or stainless steel pins.



- If there is extra space due to the thickness of the frame, use a lightweight filler material such as foamcore to fill the space so it is flush with the back edge of the frame.



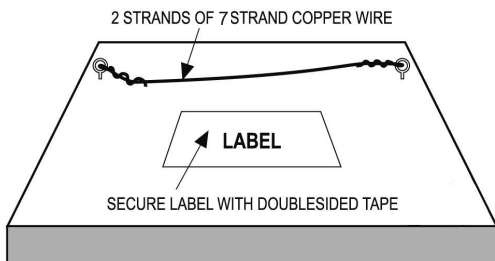
USE DOUBLE-SIDED TAPE TO SECURE ACID-FREE BACKING PAPER TO BACK OF FRAME

- Apply acid free double-sided tape to the edge of the back of the frame. Adhere a sheet of acid free paper or card, such as Fabriano, pastel paper or any acid free scrapbooking paper, to the back of the frame.
- The sheet should be large enough to cover the back of the frame. Cut the excess away from the frame with a sharp craft knife or alternatively sand the edge with an emery board to get a neat edge.



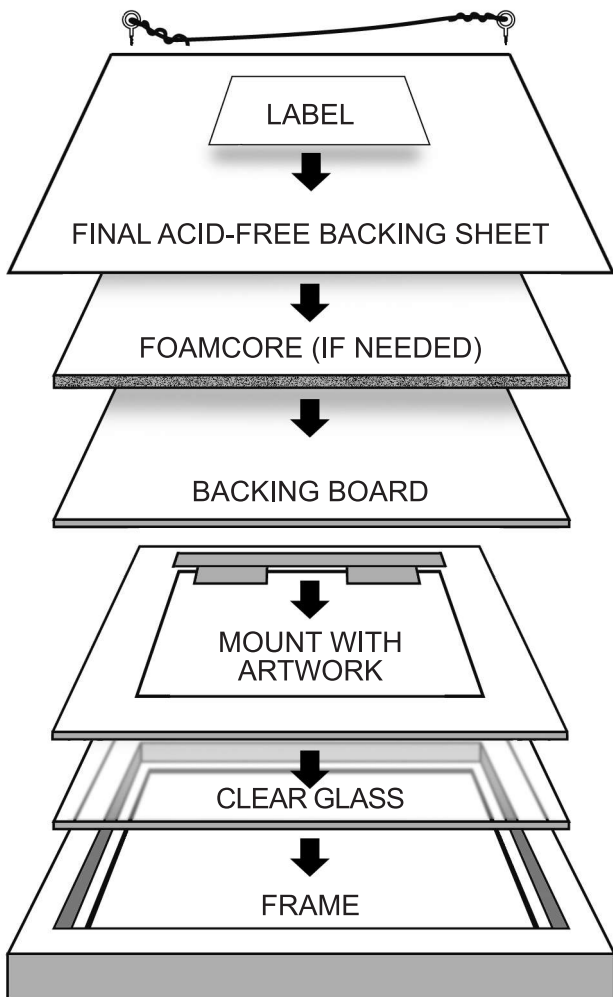
Actual Size

- Insert two appropriately small sized screw-eyes or D-rings (screw-eyes measuring 12mm in length) approximately a fifth of the way down from the top edge of the frame.



- Attach two strands of good quality seven strand copper wire for hanging.
- Attach the label **SECURELY** with acid free double-side tape to the back of the frame.

LAYER SEQUENCE FOR FRAMING AN ARCHIVAL MINIATURE WITH A MOUNT





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www.facebook.com/miniatureartsocietyofsouthafrica

It is with gratitude that the Miniature Art Society of South Africa acknowledges Charmian Kennealy's original 'Green Book', which with the assistance of Jeff Sochen was compiled using parameters from the Florida Miniature Art Society and personal experience in the field of miniature art. This has formed the backbone for the MASSA Rule Book.

The MASSA Rule Book is a collaboration between all MASSA members, both past and present, to bring together important information relevant to the making of miniature art in accordance with the rules set out by the World Federation of Miniaturists of which The Miniature Art Society of South Africa is a proud member. This edition 2017 ©