

Historical Diamonds Exhibit Opening Events To Feature Presentations, Foundation Luncheon

Mark your calendar now to attend the weekend of activities on May 2nd and 3rd celebrating the elegant *Diamonds are Forever* exhibit in the MVC Smith Gallery. The exhibit will tell the fascinating stories of history's most famous diamonds and their equally famous owners.

The stunning diamond replicas of Scott Sucher will be matched with the exquisite Historical Figures of George Stuart.

Many of the Figures will be adorned with new quarter life size replica diamonds cut by Sucher and mounted by Stuart especially for the exhibit.

Queens Elizabeth I, Victoria, Marie Antoinette, Marie de Medici, and Catherine II, along with kings Louis XIV and XV, wear their famous historical diamonds. And, there will be more Figures including a new Stuart creation just for the exhibition.



Louis XIV sports French Blue Diamond

For the first time ever in California, Sucher will exhibit his renowned full size replicas of the world's famous historical diamonds.

Friday, May 2

Opening Reception in the Smith Gallery will give guests a first peek at the exhibit and the new Historical Figure!

Saturday, May 3rd

Hope Diamond presentation by Scott Sucher. Luncheon Meeting for Historical Figures Foundation Members. Final details in a mailing in a few weeks.

LOUIS TRAVELS TO TUCSON!
Details on Page 4

Versailles Model: Best Rooms of Europe

By G. S. Stuart

The entire process of building my Versailles model lasted less than ten years, during which time it was my main obsession. It started in my early teens and ended when I went off to college. My poor academic record (attributable to dyslexia, I realized years later) resulted in my being very much self-educated. The building of the palace model was a learning process of the most basic level. In the beginning I was ignorant of most everything historical, but at the same time, fascinated by everything historical. I pushed ahead, stimulated by my early exposure to the buildings of Europe. I was an immature youth inflamed by the beauty of the Old World, and historical consistency had little place in my model. Whereas the exterior was in conformity with the original, the interior became a playground for my passion for lush surroundings, and I used rooms from other palaces as my inspiration. In the 1930s



Louis XV Bedroom, the first interior room of Stuart's model of Versailles

and 40s there were no do-it-yourself kits to help you make miniature pieces. There were fine hobby stores full of raw materials, but you had to be your own draftsman and carpenter. I used pictures to replicate these furnishings and interiors. Remember that my first view of Versailles had been many years before, and I was

now depending on the descriptions and photographs of others. I would never again actually see the actual buildings that so sparked my earliest interest.

My overall scale for the model continued to be one half-inch to the foot, which I

Continued on Page 2

Early Works

Best Rooms in Europe

Continued from page 1



Red Room in Windsor Castle

eventually discovered was only half the scale of standard miniatures. One inch to the foot is now the standard, which would have meant that my model would have been twice the size. A larger scale would have been so much more gratifying, but only had so much space to work in, and was not aware of this standard.

The first room finished was Louis XIV's bedchamber, in the very center of the building. Keep in mind that the Versailles I saw in the 1930s was rather

different than it appears today. France was in a depression after World War I, and the palace I saw was rather shabby and the furnishings makeshift. Even so, everything looked splendid to me, and that was the image I sought to replicate. Today the French have spent fortunes bringing the rooms back to their original, stunning detail.

Making furniture with bits of balsa wood and tiny pieces of fabric was painstaking, and the results were very crude, but I forged ahead. So many

rooms, so many chairs, tables, draperies and chandeliers!

Finding the appropriate glass drops for the chandeliers, or the door hinges, or mirrors, or some kind of clay to make the gilded wall decorations, was an endless adventure in research and experimentation. Through it all there was Dr. Kasten, guiding, making suggestions, searching out sources for me, and putting me in touch with people who could help move the process forward. As I've stated before, Dr. Kasten was my muse, and an absolute saint. None of this project could have taken place without her constant participation. In fact, I owe it to her for having reinforced whatever creative awakening and artistic applications I have employed throughout my life.

The exquisite rococo music room in Frederick the Great's San Souci Palace in Potsdam was a must for me to include. The wall decorations for this room were of special concern, and they were complicated raised stucco and wood carving, gilded with gold leaf. I labored over these moldings until I was as close as possible to the original. To my youthful eyes, the completed effect was marginally successful.

The paintings in the rooms were an eclectic assortment. I couldn't remember or find images of each and every painting in all the rooms, but what I could see in photographs I copied in oils. I enjoyed painting in miniature,



French Boudoir in Versailles

Early Works

Best Rooms in Europe



Inspired by a room in the Doge's Palace in Venice

and by the end of my time with the model, I had developed a modest ability for it. This part of the project was great fun.

My efforts to reproduce the endless sculptures that populated Versailles inside and out were less successful. I ended up using a modeling clay developed by the Marblex company. I continued to use this product until they discontinued it in the 1950s.

When dried and varnished (to protect the water-based clay from damp), the little figures were dark brown or black, not the pale colors of the marbles I was

copying. Some of the interior sculptures I painted white to match the rest of the decorations. The flooring of the model was actually slabs of marble from a monument maker near by. They would cut the slices for me to fit the rooms. The famous "marble court" in the center of the palace was a single sheet of white marble, as can be seen in the photos.

Because the whole structure was built directly on the ground, the lower or ground floor was too low to actually see inside the windows, so we placed blinds inside those windows and only finished and furnished the second floor. One could kneel down and peer into the win-

dows at that level.

When we finished as much as we could, we lighted the rooms of both floors with Christmas tree bulbs, hidden in the ceilings. At night, it was quite impressive, as you can see in the photos. Only much later did I find tiny "rice grain" light bulbs. What an effect it would have been to use those and actually have the chandeliers lighted!

Looking back at the photos of this project now, as I have not done for many years, I see how crude, clumsy, and inaccurate it all was. At first glance it was rather impressive, and certainly it was unlike the pastimes of most American teenage boys. It was a demonstration of focus and energy that would have been remarkable had I devoted it to my academic education. My life would have been entirely different!

The Versailles project led to painting in oils, and eventually to the Historical Figures, with a strong period of time in the theatre. My firm will and my total lack of influence from society brought mixed results, not all of which were negative. I've spent a good deal of time pondering the possibilities of what could have been.



Music Room in Sanssouci Palace at Potsdam

NEXT ISSUE

Final installment will cover the Versailles people, carriages and more details.

Foundation News

Louis XIV is Brilliant at Tucson Diamond Show



History presentation at its best with documents, diamond replicas, Historical Figure.

Photo by Robert Weldon, GIA

Louis XIV was an invited guest of the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) this month at the Tucson Gem & Mineral Show. Sporting the French Blue diamond in his cravat stick pin, the Sun King was part of an educational exhibit tracing the famous

blue diamonds from the mines in India through France and England to the United States. Note the replica diamonds from Scott Sucher of MuseumDiamonds.com. Our thanks go to Dona Dirlam of GIA for making the exhibit possible.

“Stranger than Fiction: Eccentric Personalities”

**George Stuart Historical Figures at MVC Smith Gallery
February 11—May 4, 2014**

Eccentric behavior was a trait in common to many of George Stuart’s famous and infamous historical Figures. The exhibit this spring at the Museum features Historical Figures with particularly odd or peculiar behavior. While most of us know something of Rome’s Emperor Nero and Ivan the Terrible, the escapades of Russia’s Empress Anna Ivanova (*right*) may be new to us.

George Stuart Audio Project Performances The Museum of Ventura County Pavilion

Wednesday, March 4 and Tuesdays, April 1 & 22
Cookies & Coffee 1:30 pm, Performance 2 to 3pm

\$15 general public; \$10 MVC members

For reservations call 805.653.0323 x7

Russian Empress Anna Ivanova, a crack shot!



Figuratively Speaking Publications 35 W Main Street Ste B-155 • Ventura, CA 93001 • www.galleryhistoricalfigures.com

A PUBLICATION OF THE HISTORICAL FIGURES FOUNDATION