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Citation

Nakamura, J. P. (2020). Small worlds: The miniature logic of the seventeenth-century Dutch dollhouse. *Arts In Society Academic Rhapsodies*, 5-20. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/84706>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

SMALL WORLDS

THE MINIATURE LOGIC OF THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH DOLLHOUSE

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A small corpus of extant late seventeenth-century Dutch dollhouses evidences an extravagant collecting practice among a select group of wealthy Dutch women. These dollhouses differ in significant ways from those made elsewhere before and after — in material, form, and cost — but share traits with other contemporary collecting practices such as the wunderkammer and curio-cabinet. Like curio-cabinets, Dutch dollhouses served as display cabinets for wondrous objects, but they also demonstrate different potentials for micro-cosmic thinking. The miniaturization of the objects compresses the intricacy of their facture and the potency of their materials while also putting strictures on viewers, demanding certain manners of viewing and interaction. In doing so, the dollhouses (and their owners) made viewers conform to the miniature logic of the dollhouse, incorporating the audience into the small worlds of the seventeenth-century Dutch dollhouse.

INTRODUCTION

The seventeenth-century Dutch dollhouse is having a bit of a moment. Jessie Burton's best-selling novel *The Miniaturist* (2014) centres on the wife of a wealthy Amsterdam merchant who furnishes her lavish dollhouse with gifts from a mysterious miniaturist; a BBC mini-series based on the book — filmed in our own Leiden on the Rapenburg — aired in 2017 and 2018; and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts recently acquired a collection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch miniatures, housed within a recreation of a period dollhouse.¹ Interest in these objects has thus soared, but in order to grasp the significance

¹ The MFA installed the miniatures in rooms (modern recreations) housed within a seventeenth-century cabinet. They come from the Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo collection.

of Dutch seventeenth-century dollhouses and what makes them so unique, one must first examine the broader practices amongst which they were collected and assembled. Only then does it become possible to understand the potential power of this peculiar form of miniature thinking.

There are three extant seventeenth-century dollhouse cabinets (Figs. 1-3), which by some strange quirk of history were all assembled by women named Petronella (also the name of Burton's protagonist). The most famous and lavish example is that of Petronella Oortman, now displayed in the Rijksmuseum alongside another dollhouse assembled by Petronella Dunois. The third, in Utrecht's Centraal Museum, is that of Petronella Oortmans de la Court.² Two eighteenth-century examples were created by Sara Rothé from parts of

Fig. 1. Various makers

The dollhouse of Petronella Oortman,
c.1686-1710.

255 × 190 × 78cm (+ 28cm extension
on back), various materials

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
BK-NM-1010



² The standard texts on these dollhouses (including inventories of their contents) are Jet Pijzel-Dommisse, *Het Hollandse pronkpoppenhuis: Interieur en huishouden in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000); *Ibid.*, *Het poppenhuis van Petronella de la Court* (Utrecht/Antwerp: Veen/Reflex, 1987); see also Susan Broomhall, "Imagined Domesticities in Early Modern Dutch Dollhouses," *Parergon* 24 (2007), 47-67.



Fig. 2. Various makers. *The dollhouse of Petronella Dunois*, c. 1676. 200 × 150.5 × 56 cm, various materials
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, BK-14656

dollhouses assembled in the previous century by Cornelia van der Gon (these at the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, and the Kunstmuseum, The Hague).³ These five examples give a good sense of what set the dollhouses of the seventeenth-century Netherlands apart from those made elsewhere before and after. Unlike other dollhouses, these took the form of cabinets with closable doors, which from the outside had no semblance of a miniature house. They were made of the most precious materials, incorporating ebony, brazilwood,

Fig. 3. Various makers
The dollhouse of Petronella Oortmans de la Court, c. 1670-90
 206.5 x 189 x 79 cm,
 various materials
 Centraal Museum, Utrecht, the Netherlands, Inv. Nr. 5000
 [© Centraal Museum, Utrecht / Adriaan van Dam]



³ Jet Pijzel-Dommisse, *'t is poppe goet en anders niet: Het poppenhuis in het Frans Halsmuseum* (Haarlem: De Haan, 1980); *Ibid.*, *Het poppenhuis van het Haags Gemeentemuseum* (The Hague: Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, 1988); Michelle Moseley-Christian, "Consuming Excess: Pronk Poppenhuisen and the Dollhouses of Sara Rothé," in *The Uses of Excess in Visual and Material Culture, 1600-2010.*, ed. Julia Skelly (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 63-88.

tortoiseshell, ivory, silver, porcelain, and more; the craftsmanship of both the cabinets and their contents was of the highest quality. They were not made for children or for play but were instead a serious collecting practice and the purview of only a small group of very wealthy women. One early eighteenth-century visitor estimated that Oortman's cabinet must have cost between twenty and thirty thousand guilders — rivalling the cost of an actual canal home, fully-furnished.⁴ Although this estimate likely exceeded the actual cost, it speaks to the overwhelming extravagance of the dollhouse and the impression it must have had on viewers.

THE DOLLHOUSE AND THE CURIO-CABINET

On account of their form, cost, and materials, Dutch dollhouses have often been seen as gendered counterparts to the curio-cabinets and *wunderkammern* of the early modern period. In these cabinets and rooms, collectors — generally men — amassed natural specimens, exotica, curiosities, and examples of fine craftsmanship.⁵ They were seen as representations of the world in microcosm, or “a world of wonders in one closet shut”, containing specimens from all over the world, of all manner of animal, mineral, plant, and crafted object.⁶ The microcosmic thinking behind the curio-cabinet reflected similar ideas manifest in cartographic and scientific endeavors, which aimed to collapse the complexities of the world into a map, atlas, or magnifying lens.⁷ Like their curio-cabinet counterparts, Dutch dollhouses were contained within cabinets, fashioned from rare and costly materials, and filled with examples of exquisite craftsmanship. They similarly organized the world into discrete compartments, each with its own domain. While an early modern

⁴ Pijzel-Dommisse reproduces the 1718 eyewitness account of Zacharias Konrad von Uffenbach, *Het Hollandse pronkpoppenhuis*, 247; J.R. ter Molen, “Een bezichtiging van het poppenhuis van Petronella Brandt-Oortman in de zomer van 1718,” *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 42 (1994), 122-25; Michelle Moseley-Christian, “Seventeenth-Century ‘Pronk Poppenhuisen’: Domestic Space and the Ritual Function of Dutch Dollhouses for Women,” *Home Cultures* 7.3 (2010), 344-45.

⁵ Jennifer Spinks and Susan Broomhall, *Early Modern Women in the Low Countries: Feminizing Sources and Interpretations of the Past* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 99-100.

⁶ This description is taken from a seventeenth-century English collector's epitaph. Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 17.

⁷ For more on *kunst-* and *wunderkammern* see Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001); Findlen, *Possessing Nature*.

wunderkammer might contain objects grouped by geographic origin or by material properties, the dollhouse organized the rooms through their ostensible functions in the domestic sphere: the kitchen, the sitting room, the study, the nursery — each had its place and was furnished accordingly.

But the microcosmic logic behind the *wunderkammer* differed in a significant way from that of the dollhouse. The scope of the former was always going to be limited, as any specimen could only stand in for a much larger corpus. A shell might stand in as a representative of all shells of that variety, or of all shells in general. Or otherwise, it might serve as an aberrant specimen whose identity was defined *vis a vis* an ideal.⁸ Its relationship to the greater world was synecdochal, but in a dollhouse objects did not function as representatives of greater *genera*. In this way, their microcosm was more of a closed system, rather than one that required outside referents. Although a dollhouse object might resemble a full-size equivalent, contrary to what has sometimes been claimed, no dollhouse owner ever commissioned an exact replica of her own home in miniature.⁹

The dollhouses contained original — if exiguous — objects, rather than replicas or copies. They were often made of the same materials as their full-size counterparts, and in some cases they were made by the selfsame craftspeople. The miniature paintings by Willem van Mieris that hang on the walls of De la Court's dollhouse are not simulacra of Van Mieris paintings, they *are* his paintings. Dollhouses held works by the same hands that furnished regular-sized art collections (Fig. 4). The reed baskets were woven strand by strand in the same meticulous manner as full-size examples. The silk was real silk, the linen real linen. Books were fashioned from details of prints cut down and bound together or filled with handwritten and entirely legible texts (Fig. 5). Such books were unique objects that only

⁸ Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*, 154, 272; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan Smith [uncredited] (Milton: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 34-35.

⁹ Martha Hollander claims that De la Court's dollhouse was an exact replica of her home, an impossibility given the fact that one room is actually a *trompe l'oeil* outdoor garden. *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 125; Melinda Vander Ploeg Fallon argues otherwise, as there were different numbers of rooms in the home versus the dollhouse. Other differences, such as lack of liminal spaces, will be discussed later in this article. "Petronella de La Court and Agneta Block: Experiencing Collections in Late Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam," *Aurora* 4 (2003), 102.

existed in these collections. Miniature porcelain was shipped all the way from China and Japan, as was a painted Japanese folding screen. De la Court and Dunois' dollhouses even include actual dried flatfish, sticklebacks, and turtles apparently preserved since the seventeenth century.¹⁰ Oortman's dollhouse features a miniature curio-cabinet filled with actual tiny shells; it is not a representation of a shell collection, but rather is one (Fig. 6). Similar tiny collections of shells, coral, pearls, coins, minerals, and stones fill cabinets in a number



Fig. 4. Various makers Detail of Fig. 3 (*Salon room*), c. 1670-90 Centraal Museum, Utrecht, the Netherlands
Inv. Nr. 5000 [© Centraal Museum, Utrecht / Adriaan van Dam]

¹⁰ For inventories of the dollhouses' contents, and specifically Asian imports, books, and preserved animals, see Pijzel-Dommisse, *Het Hollandse pronkpoppenhuis*, 230, 314-15, 335-45; *Ibid.*, *Het poppenhuis van Petronella de la Court*, 22-25, 50; *Ibid.*, *Het poppenhuis van het Haags Gemeentemuseum*, 59-60; *Ibid.*, *'t is poppe goet en anders niet*, 14.

of the dollhouses. One such miniature curio-cabinet features a tiny room — or *doorkijkje* — at its centre, which would have been used to display one of the objects the cabinet contained: a display within a display within a display.¹¹ In this way these differ significantly from many later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century miniatures which are often made entirely of silver (or other ersatz materials), be they baskets, chairs, plates, or otherwise.¹²

Although, admittedly, some material substitutions do occur, such as a ceiling decorated with a large engraving or a still-life ‘painting’ made with gouache on paper, the Dutch seventeenth-century dollhouse is remarkable and set apart from other dollhouses in its close concordance between the material and facture of the miniature objects and those of a normal size. Most of the objects within the dollhouses are imbued with all the craftsmanship



Fig. 5. Anonymous (various makers?), *Books from the dollhouse of Petronella Oortman*, c. 1690-1710. 3 × 2.5 × 0.9 cm, leather and paper (hand-coloured intaglio prints) Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands BK-NM-1010-148-A

¹¹ Pijzel-Dommisse, *Het poppenhuis van het Haags Gemeentemuseum*, 10, 59, 83-85; *Ibid.*, *Het poppenhuis van Petronella de la Court*, 35-37.

¹² See, for example, the number of silver objects (including items such as a loom and bassinet, made of wood or reed in the seventeenth-century examples) in the eighteenth-century dollhouse of Anna Maria Trip, c. 1750, now kept in the *zilver-schatkamer* of the Rijksmuseum Twenthe, or the collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century silver miniatures (including chairs) in the Museum Bredius in The Hague.

and materiality of their full-size counterparts, merely condensed. In these dollhouses, one could peruse and even read the books that filled the miniature libraries, admire the varieties of shells and minerals that filled the curio-cabinets, or inspect the artful handling of a mythological scene by Van Mieris or a landscape by Herman Saftleven.



Fig. 6. Anonymous
A miniature cabinet of shells
from the dollhouse of Petronella
Oortman, c. 1690-1710
28.2 × 23.2 × 9.0 cm, fruitwood,
shells, wax
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam,
the Netherlands
BK-NM-1010-2

The fascination with these dollhouses came then, as it does now, from this reduction of scale without compromising the potency of the objects they contained. In his *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard claimed that:

The cleverer I am at miniaturizing the world, the better I possess it. But in doing this, it must be understood that values become condensed and enriched in

miniature... One must go beyond logic in order to experience what is large in what is small.¹³

Cornelia, Sara, and the Petronellas were indeed very clever at miniaturizing their worlds, and they did so at the expense of much time, effort, and resources — both their own and of those whom they commissioned. All of that labour and material was then imbued into the objects in the microcosm of the seventeenth-century Dutch dollhouse. It is no wonder that such objects retain our interest and admiration today.

EXPERIENCE MINIATURIZED

The dollhouses also hold obvious connections to both genre and still-life painting of the period. For an art in which so much might depend upon the pitted skin of a curled lemon peel or the sheen of a Wan Li bowl, the dollhouse emptied of its figures offered a near-inexhaustible still life. But unlike the offerings of Willem Kalf or Jan De Heem — accessible only optically — here one could pick up and feel the shells, rotate the porcelain, and flip through and read the books. This interactive element distinguishes the dollhouse from similar painted scenes, while also granting it a certain power over its viewers. The miniature world of the dollhouse was eminently accessible to its audience, so long as they were allowed in by its owner and submitted to the physical constraints of the miniature objects. A viewer's ability to interact with the dollhouse objects in real, substantive ways assimilated them into the miniature world as a participant, who then took the place of the diminutive dolls who might normally serve as proxies.¹⁴

When inviting someone to look at her dollhouse, a Petronella (or Cornelia or Sara) was also asking them to conform to the demands of her miniature world. The dollhouse's furnishings, decorations, and collections would have forced their audience to handle and view

¹³ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon, 1994), 150.

¹⁴ Moseley-Christian has argued that the interactive aspect was more performative, ritual, and didactic for the owner, but does not address how it would have functioned for other viewers. Such a reading minimizes the agency of the women who carefully commissioned, curated, and arranged these intricate collections. "Pronk poppenhuisen," 344-46, 356-57.

them in particular ways. A viewer could read a book, but only if they pulled it close to their face, tucking in their elbows and making themselves small so that they might delicately flip through its tiny pages.¹⁵ Their movements too had to become small, lest they knock over a miniature porcelain cabinet like the proverbial bull in a china shop. Or a viewer might wish to examine the ceiling paintings of some room, crouching down and contorting their head in order to get a better view from below. In viewing and interacting with the dollhouses, viewers would have had to minimize their posture and movements, in a way miniaturizing themselves in order to participate in the logic of the dollhouse. Thus, by inviting a guest into her dollhouse, the owner also assimilated them into a realm over which she had knowledge, power, and control.

The power of the dollhouse (and its owner) over its viewers was psychological as well as physical. A number of experimental studies have shown that one's perception of time is affected when interacting with miniatures and scale models.¹⁶ Although findings vary depending on the experiment's conditions, the general trend is that time is also compressed for viewers when thinking and interacting in miniature scale. The studies demonstrated that someone handling or examining something at a small scale overestimates the amount of time that has passed compared to when they interact with a similar object or image at a larger scale. In effect, time flies when you're thinking small. The microcosm of the dollhouse thus imposed on its viewer not only its own requirements of viewing but also

¹⁵ Benjamin Tilghman has discussed how the physical constraints of viewing and handling miniature books was also conducive to meditative thought. "Divinity in the Details: Miniaturization and Meditation in a Passion Cycle by Johannes Wierix," *Journal of the Walters Art Museum*. 68-69 (2012), 130-31.

¹⁶ There are a number of studies cited in the literature and their conclusions vary widely, but all seem to point to some correlation between miniatures and a compression of perceived time. The very different results may have come from the wording of their questioning, dependent on whether subjects were asked to imagine how much time had passed for a miniature figure within a scale model, or for themselves while they imagined performing tasks within a scale model. But in all cases, interaction with the miniature had some effect on the perceived compression of time. Discussion of these findings within the humanities often misses the important detail that only in the 1986 study were subjects actually asked to accurately guess how much time had passed for themselves. Thomas Mitchell and Roy Davis, "The Perception of Time in Scale Model Environments," *Perception* 16.1 (1987), 5-16; D. J. Bobko, P. Bobko, and M. A. Davis, "Effect of Visual Display Scale on Duration Estimates," *Human Factors* 28.2 (1986), 153-58; A. J. DeLong, "Phenomenological Space-Time: Toward an Experiential Relativity," *Science* 213. 4508 (1981), 681-83; Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), 65-67.

its own temporal logic. A dollhouse owner's affective power over her viewer was very real, and it was augmented by the power differential already resulting from her perfect knowledge of the dollhouse's contents, hidden away in countless tiny cabinets and drawers, and enclosed within the greater cabinet's doors.

MAXIMIZING DISPLAY

While dollhouse cabinets could be closed to hide and separate their contents from the outside world — making access a privilege to be granted by their owners — they were at the same time built to maximize display. The standard format of the dollhouse room had one wall removed, with furnishings arranged so as not to block the frontal view, as if on a stage. Such a perspective presents the viewer not with a coherent interior space of a whole home, but rather with a series of vignettes or *tableaux vivants*, with each discrete space functioning independently of its adjacent compartments.¹⁷ That the dollhouse functioned more as a collection of isolated rooms is reflected in the fact that, remarkably, none of the surviving Dutch dollhouses included any stairwells from which to get from one floor to the next. In this respect too, they differ from earlier and later dollhouses which more closely reflect the layouts of actual homes.¹⁸ Despite the unprecedented fidelity of the dollhouse's miniature objects to their models, the home and its rooms were merely framing devices for the display of these objects. The navigability of the interior spaces relative to one another was of no concern. Many of the rooms in the dollhouses lack doors, and when present, they are often not functional or only appear on one side of a wall, unable to provide passage from one room to another. The lack of liminal spaces emphasizes that dollhouses were never meant to be replicas of actual houses in miniature; they were instead collections of objects organized according to their proper place, much like the curio-cabinet, and were arranged to maximize display of the objects they housed.

¹⁷ Mariët Westermann discusses how dollhouses reflect the increasing specialization of rooms in actual Dutch homes. "‘Costly and Curious, Full of Pleasure and Home Contentment’: Making Home in the Dutch Republic," in *Art & Home: Dutch Interiors in the Age of Rembrandt*, ed. Mariët Westermann (Zwolle: Waanders, 2001), 43-45; Moseley-Christian, "Pronk poppenhuisen," 352-53; Stewart, *On Longing*, 54, 62-63.

¹⁸ A number of them do, however, have stairwells in the peat-loft rooms on the top floor, some of which lead to a dead end at the ceiling.

Jacob Appel's painting from around 1700 of Oortman's dollhouse further reflects this understanding of dollhouse logic (Fig. 7). Appel depicted the dollhouse cabinet in its entirety, pushed up against a wall and viewed frontally with curtains pulled back and doors splayed open. While the cabinet itself and everything outside of it is rendered as a perspectively coherent space, the interior refuses to yield to the logic of the outside world. Instead, each of the nine miniature rooms is accorded its own vanishing point, with a shallow depth of field that allows one to see the floor, ceiling, and walls all at once, again maximizing display. Each room is a world unto itself, completely detached not only from



Fig. 7. Jacob Appel

The Dollhouse of Petronella Oortman, c. 1710

87 x 69 cm, oil on parchment on canvas

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

SK-A-4245

the space outside of the cabinet, but also from one another. The perspectival logic is as if the viewer had approached the cabinet from afar, and then situated his or her face right in front of each room one by one, gaining independent perspectives into each compartment. The feasibility of the overall view of the cabinet is compromised by its subordination to the experience of the individual rooms over time.

The *tableau-vivant*-like quality of the dollhouse and its construction as a collection of independent scenes is also emphasized by the figures in Appel's painting. The dolls — if one could call them that — interact with one another, exchanging glances and performing tasks with a dexterity foreign to the stiff and inexpressive manikins that have come down to us in other dollhouses. They instead appear more like actors on stages, or perhaps like a series of genre scenes like those made famous by Johannes Vermeer or Pieter de Hooch. The figures, no less than a dozen children and almost as many adults, populate nearly every room, enacting a wide variety of scenes. Two men play backgammon in one room while a wake is held for a dead child just downstairs. Such events are temporally and narratively incompatible, and instead each room functions as a self-contained space and moment. In some ways the seventeenth-century dollhouse looked remarkably like its full-scale counterpart, but it also diverged from its model in significant ways and adhered to its own internal logic independent from that of our world.

HUMAN AND OBJECT AGENTS

It has been argued that early modern Dutch women assembled these dollhouse collections because spending money on other art might have been seen as indecorous, and in framing their collections as domestic exemplars they insulated themselves from such criticism.¹⁹ Indeed there are indications that, much like still-life painting, dollhouses could impart the moralizing lessons of a *vanitas*, warning of the impermanence of all earthly things. One dollhouse wall-hanging is adorned with verses from an emblem book warning that “All things that one sees here on Earth / are dolls’ goods and nothing more”.²⁰ But Petronella

¹⁹ Moseley-Christian, “Consuming Excess” 65, 71–73; Vander Ploeg Fallon, “Petronella de La Court and Agneta Block,” 95–96.

²⁰ “AL wat men hier op AERDEN SIET / Is poppe goet en anders niet”. Moseley-Christian, “Consuming Excess,” 72.

de la Court was no ascetic: she owned a large collection of paintings and sculpture, as well as a *wunderkammer*-worthy selection of *naturalia* and *artificialia* including stuffed birds, an ostrich egg, Asian drawings, an elaborate atlas, and albums of drawings of insects, plants, and birds.²¹ Such collecting practices — usually the purview of men — demonstrate De la Court's exceptionalism, and if there were some amount of Calvinist decorum to be preserved by limiting one's collection to a dollhouse, De la Court was already well past that point. Her dollhouse was not a proxy for a 'real' collection, but a significant part of a broader collecting program. The dollhouse collectors were of such means that they could, and did, have other collections, but the dollhouse was a peculiar mode of collecting that they intentionally cultivated.

Annabel Wharton has discussed Carrie Stettheimer's early twentieth-century dollhouse in terms of the agency of objects, elucidating how "scale models act independently of both their archetypes and their originating ideas [... and also] of their makers and their consumers".²² She further explains that models can act as strong or weak agents, partly but not entirely dependent on their relation to their referents. Strong models, she contends, are distinguished by their ability to produce affect in those who come into contact with them. Dutch dollhouses of the seventeenth century certainly acted independently of their makers and viewers, and in their unique form distinguished themselves from their full-size counterparts. In her will, Petronella de La Court left instructions that while the majority of her collection could be sold off and dispersed, the dollhouse and atlas were to remain in the care of her children for at least three years.²³ Though her motivations remain unclear, the dollhouse apparently held particular power for — or over — her.

CONCLUSION

I have argued above that part of the power of the dollhouses of the Petronellas, Cornelia, and Sara lie in their independence from their ostensible referents. Dollhouses did not

²¹ Vander Ploeg Fallon, "Petronella de La Court and Agneta Block," 103.

²² Annabel Wharton, "Doll's House/Dollhouse: Models and Agency," *Journal of American Studies* 53.1 (2019), 29.

²³ Vander Ploeg Fallon, "Petronella de La Court and Agneta Block," 101-2.

reproduce the homes of their owners but were instead independent worlds with their own logic and rules. They acted on their interlocutors by demanding certain posturing, both physical and mental. They mediated interactions between their owners and visiting guests, serving as physical embodiments of their owners' knowledge and possession of rarefied and miniature worlds. In form, they maximized display while also maintaining a certain inaccessibility — compartments within compartments that had to be opened and explored. And they were filled with objects that were just foreign enough to their models to arouse curiosity, wonder, and an affect in their viewers which, as Wharton argues, “works on the viscera of those who encounter it — through bodily sensation and intuition rather than through cognition and intellect”.²⁴ Perhaps this is what Bachelard meant when he declared: “One must go beyond logic in order to experience what is large in what is small”. The seventeenth-century dollhouse had its own kind of miniature logic that granted it power over, and agency with respect to, its viewers. Lured into the dollhouse by its condensed complexity, viewers could spend hours investigating its microcosmic world. As the adage goes, *multum in parvo*; the small contains multitudes.

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²⁴ Wharton, “Doll’s House/Dollhouse,” 37.