

—Slug:.....COMM-0859.arts.Museum_of_Tiny
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—Dateline.....Brattleboro
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[Redacted]

Notes from editor (not for publication):

Note spelling: Celani. Also, I noticed on the website that Celani uses they/them pronouns. Confirmed with quick text exchange with Dory.

Line 27: I thought a little more tongue-in-cheek would make this work better. It also is how the character is introduced on the website, not as an AKA for Dory, which makes him sound delusional.

Line 86: Added more info. Hadn't seen this one. Delightful! (Thought of working a "rat race" pun in there, but that would have added clutter.)

Line 106: Printing and publishing geek added a little more info.

Line 133: Not the architect, unless I've grossly missed something as I checked it.

Safe travels and happy writing this month!

[Redacted]

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Curating miniature worlds

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 The Museum of Things Tiny & Found finds a home at the
3 Hooker-Dunham Theater and Gallery

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 If you miss Brattleboro’s Festival of Miniatures that
6 garnered lots of attention for its pizzazz, The Museum of Things
7 Tiny & Found (MTTF), one feature of the holiday event, is now
8 nestled permanently in the lobby of the Hooker-Dunham Theater
9 and Gallery.

10 The museum will open for sneak peeks this weekend,
11 starting at Gallery Walk from 3 to 7 p.m. on Friday, March 27,
12 with a tour at 6 p.m. Miniature hors d’oeuvres and miniature
13 cocktails will be served.

14 The MTTF will open again from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., on
15 Saturday, March 28 and on Sunday, March 29 (Easter) with a tour
16 at 3 p.m. on both days.

17 More than 1,200 people saw the museum’s pop-up
18 exhibit at the Latchis Gallery during the Festival of Miniatures.

19 *The Commons* spoke recently with Dory Hamm, MTTF’s
20 creative engine, who says the museum will become “a sanctuary
21 for all things miniature with the works/collections from at least 20
22 artists, as well as a makers’ gift shop for consignment.”

23 Hamm says that he and MTTF’s curatorial manager,
24 Tabitha Celani “dream of makers workshops, a start/stop
25 animation film festival, and more.” Celani describes herself as
26 “co-curator/co-proprietor/co-founder, so to speak.”

27 (The museum’s website attributes the founding to a third
28 staff member, one “Baron Joelseph Pumpernickel Kleinhamm,”
29 who purportedly brings to the table advanced degrees in
30 “Snackology, Zoomology, Playology, Snuggleomics, and
31 Curation” at his young age of 11 years old.)

32 In a news release, the curators describe MTTF as “a
33 museum of things, yes indeed, tiny and found.”

34 Hamm stresses the value of both “found” and “tiny.”

35 He says the museum hopes to cover “a wide range of
36 tiny things” found everywhere “from antique shops to attics to sea
37 beds,” including, but not limited to “dollhouses, dioramas, trains,
38 planes, automobiles, thimbles, buttons, seashells, acorns,

39 tchotchkes, trinkets, toys, tools, beads, portraits, jewelry, other
40 nature items, and miniatures by the hundreds.”

41 Celani expands on the “found,” too.

42 “‘Found,’ meaning literally found on the street or found
43 two objects that went together and made a cute little pot,” they
44 say, adding that MTTF treasures the artistry and “just the weird
45 little freaky miracles of nature and what they produce on such a
46 small scale.”

47 **‘Incredibly serendipitous’**

48 Enthusiasm for the miniatures museum at the Latchis
49 exceeded expectations, so “we started to talk and dream about
50 what next,” Celani said. “It seemed donors were willing to help
51 create a miniature museum as a kind of holding place for the
52 Festival of Miniatures throughout the year.”

53 The establishment of the MTTF “came about through
54 [Hamm’s] collaboration first with Vermont Suitcase Company
55 (VSC),” with which Hamm is a player.

56 Shannon Ward, who runs the Hooker-Dunham and is
57 also in the VSC, “had the theater space that was needing more
58 energy while VSC needed storage and a rehearsal space,” she
59 says. “So that was just a natural partnership.”

60 Hamm was also drawn to the underutilized gallery
61 space, and was inspired by its “weird, curved walls and nooks,”
62 which can create challenges for some artists.

63 “All of a sudden, you start to fill those curved walls and
64 nooks with miniature things,” and it felt “like little underground,
65 magical, miniature way,” he says. “It just was a dream to dream
66 to dream.”

67 For Celani, “this whole museum project has felt
68 incredibly serendipitous,” they say. “It’s all just really falling into
69 place.”

70 A visual artist working out of a downtown studio — a
71 “gorgeous little room in this 1920s-ish building with tin ceilings”
72 and a window that looks out on trees — “my miniature work

73 [including jewelry] is sort of a cobbling together of things I've
74 made by hand myself or existing objects that are in miniature
75 repurposed," they say.

76 They explain that "the rich sense of depth and scene and
77 environment you can get from really lovingly made miniatures" is
78 "a huge tenet of the museum itself."

79 Pointing out the four "wings" of the museum, Hamm
80 enumerates six filled printers' trays both from the MTTF
81 permanent collection and on loan, as well as dollhouses,
82 dioramas, and a rotating gallery in "a tiny hallway off the main
83 gallery."

84 "And we'll be getting the Mouse Metro," he said of the
85 miniature subway system, populated with anthropomorphized
86 mice, that was crafted by Jonny Wolfman and Wendy Windle of
87 Brattleboro. That effort was named "Champion (Maker Award),"
88 the festival's top honor.

89 For railroad enthusiasts, the model trains that ran in
90 Beadniks will now chug along a raised track, thanks to owner
91 Brian Robertshaw.

92 There will be a sensory area, too, Celani adds: an
93 interactive space inviting visitors to draw mini self-portraits and to
94 physically interact with "a bunch of objects that can be touched,
95 held, and viewed up close" with magnifying glasses.

96 "I've always been obsessed with miniature things," says
97 Hamm, and he's been collecting them his whole life. "Now I just
98 enjoy the curation — the putting of everything perfectly into little
99 print trays and making it all look beautiful."

100 A theater person at the core, he adds, "as a kid, I would
101 spend hours and hours setting up scenes — just building the
102 world. And then we'd play with it for 20 minutes."

103 "It's always about the curating and building of a world,"
104 he says. "And telling a story in that miniature world."

105 Of the workshops in the offing, Hamm says he'll start the
106 run with "how to curate your own print press tray."

107 “We have the advantage of living in an old book press
108 town where there’re actually a fair number of print press trays
109 kicking around,” he says of the antique wooden flat drawers that
110 once held metal type used in letterpress printing in the heyday of
111 Brattleboro’s book printing and manufacturing industrial era.
112 “We’re going to be selling some of those in the museum gift
113 shop.”

114 **A museum-themed Festival of** 115 **Miniatures in December**

116 Hamm praises Festival of Miniatures founder Melany
117 Kahn.

118 “This all really wouldn’t exist without her [...] dreaming
119 and encouraging. She’s been such an incredible force in making
120 all this happen,” he says, noting that Kahn showed up to help
121 paint MTTF gallery walls recently. “She’s very empowering. And
122 so dedicated to Brattleboro and to downtown revitalization.”

123 For its quirky and esoteric nature and the prospect of
124 discovering yet another gem in town, it’s Hamm’s hope — shared
125 by Kahn — that the museum will find a place on Atlas Obscura
126 (atlasobscura.com), a website that describes itself as devoted to
127 stories of “the world’s most wondrous places and foods,”
128 “because Brattleboro will be home to one of the only back-alley
129 miniature museums in the world.”

130 As Kahn speaks with *The Commons*, she shares a new
131 acquisition: an architecturally accurate miniature of Boston’s
132 Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum’s garden floor, pointing out
133 materials and features that might well have made the museum’s
134 architect, Willard T. Sears, quite proud.

135 The Festival will have a museum theme in its second
136 year, she says.

137 Explaining the rationale, she adds, “museums help to
138 promote and create community and connectivity,” and

139 Brattleboro has even more to offer in that realm with Beadniks'
140 bead museum, among others now in the area and in the works.

141 Moreover, Kahn adds, school spirit houses — miniature
142 house models that are distributed to schools for classes to
143 decorate collectively — will return in December, when 14 area
144 schools will be invited to create a museum out of the spirit house
145 each will be given.

146 “It could be a dinosaur museum, a plant museum, art
147 museum, whatever they want it to be,” she says.

148 Threading the museum theme throughout the festival,
149 Kahn adds “it feels absolutely perfect for Brattleboro.”

150 **‘Those can’t stay in this** 151 **apartment’**

152 Kahn describes Hamm and Celani as “the heartbeat of
153 the Museum of Things Tiny & Found.”

154 She knew Hamm through New England Youth Theatre
155 and, through the grapevine, heard of the “eccentric collections”
156 housed in the apartment that Hamm shares with Sandy Klein,
157 who directs the NEYT costume department.

158 “They’re unbelievably creative. So I saw his printer
159 display on the wall and I said, ‘Dory, those can’t stay in this
160 apartment,’ Kahn recalls. ““People need to see them for the
161 festival.”

162 Kahn connected Hamm with Jon Potter, executive
163 director of Latchis Arts and the Latchis Theatre, and the ball
164 started rolling. MTTF opened with the festival last Dec. 1.

165 The new MTTF will be open to all. A first phase to
166 provide access for those with mobility issues — long a limitation
167 of the space, which is one floor below street level — is in the
168 works.

169 The first phase of this access — an electronic stair chair
170 given to MTTF — “will hopefully be installed sometime this
171 spring/summer,” the news release says.

172 "We also plan on offering a free digital tour on our
173 website for all to appreciate from near or far," the release adds.
174 MTF also envisions events and maker workshops.

175 For those interested in exhibiting miniatures or offering a
176 donation of "tinies, miniatures, dollhouses, or antiques," contact
177 Hamm and Celani at museumoftiny@gmail.com.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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178 After the soft opening this weekend, MTF will officially
179 open In the Hooker-Dunham Theater and Gallery, 139 Main St.
180 #407, Friday, May 1, 3 to 7 p.m., for Gallery Walk, and then will
181 open every weekend from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and weekdays by
182 appointment. Follow the alleyway between Marigold and Gallery
183 in the Woods, and down those stairs.

184 Admission during posted hours is on a "pay-what-you-
185 can" basis: A donation of \$5 to \$10 is suggested, but folks are
186 welcome in for free. Private tours can be booked online for a
187 sliding scale of \$10 per person.

188 For more information and to book tours, visit
189 museumoftiny.com. See more photos at
190 [instagram.com/museumofthingstinyandfound/](https://www.instagram.com/museumofthingstinyandfound/).

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