

Telling Details



Photographs from *Teenage Stories*, by Julia Fullerton-Batten, taken at Mini-Europe in Brussels. Clockwise from top: *Book*, 2006, with Finland's Olavinlinna Castle; *Blindfold*, 2006, set at Paris's Sacré Coeur; *Marbles*, 2006, with Spain's Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial.

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SCALED DOWN TO a fraction of the size of the originals, model villages have become a worldwide phenomenon. Roland Callingham, a London accountant, created Bekonscot, the first one to become a tourist attraction, in 1929. He replicated the undisturbed England of his day, with six different villages, lakes, castles, and more than 400 yards of model railway, all at 1/12 their original size.

Bekonscot, which donates its admission profits to charity, became so popular that it has since inspired miniature parks in 30 countries, including Japan, Israel, France, Turkey, and Spain. Not all are memorials to halcyon days. Some are part of larger theme parks, while others are purely educational. Many are placed within landscaped gardens. Mini-Europe, in Brussels, sticks to the present, with replicas of well-known buildings throughout the European Union. Perhaps the most famous miniature park in the world, Madurodam, in the Hague, was begun in 1952 and attracts as many as 800,000 visitors a year to see more than 700 models of Dutch landmarks, bridges, streets, and parks, as well as an airport. It

recently prompted Edward van de Meer, a U.S. immigrant from Holland, to construct a 10-acre miniature United States in Las Vegas to teach Americans about geography.

The villages have also fired the imagination of artist Julia Fullerton-Batten. For a recent project, *Teenage Stories*, commissioned by the photography magazine *C Photo*, she chose some of the more charming miniature villages as her settings. "I visited a number of them in the U.K.," says the photographer, who was born in Bremen, Germany; grew up in the United States; and is now based in London. "But not all felt or looked right for what I was trying to achieve." Eventually, she settled on Mini-Europe, Pueblo Chico in the Canary Islands, and Babbacombe in England for a series in which, like Rabelais's famous giant Pantagruel, teenage girls appear at once both self-conscious and insouciant, dwarfing their surroundings. —Kolby Yarnell

For more information on Julia Fullerton-Batten, contact Randall Scott Gallery, www.randallscottgallery.com

COURTESY OF JULIA FULLERTON-BATTEN AND RANDALL SCOTT GALLERY.