

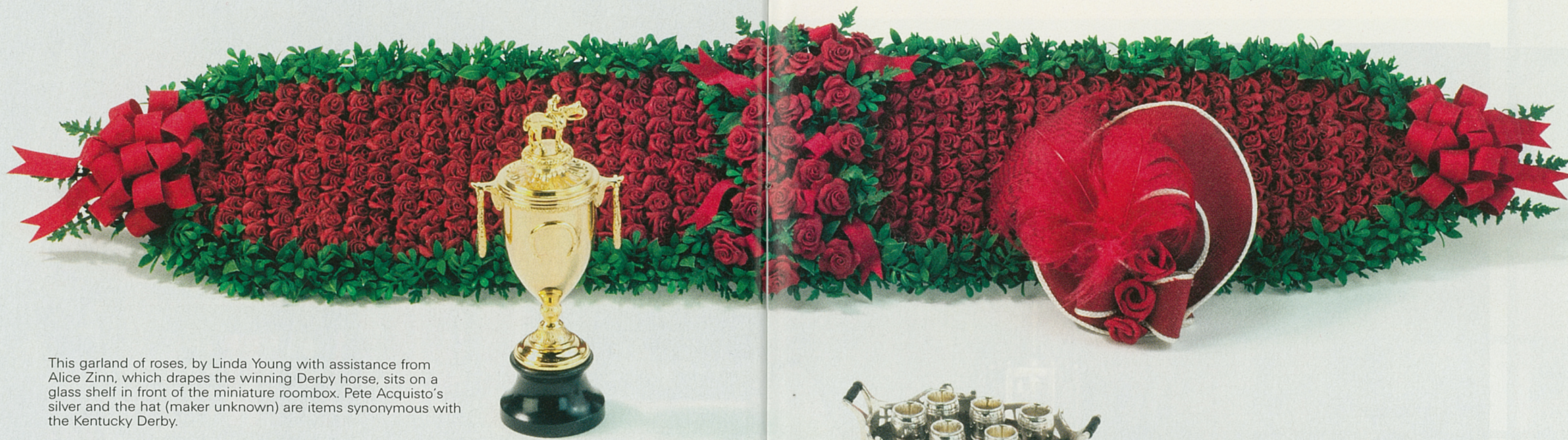
# A Winning Combination

By Sharon Doddroe  
Photography by Kim McKisson



The Kentucky Horse Farm Library was originally created as A Gentleman's Study by Ray Whittedge, who made several furnishings including the sofa, striped chair, draperies and books. Kaye Browning later added pieces symbolic of the Kentucky Derby.





This garland of roses, by Linda Young with assistance from Alice Zinn, which drapes the winning Derby horse, sits on a glass shelf in front of the miniature roombox. Pete Acquisto's silver and the hat (maker unknown) are items synonymous with the Kentucky Derby.

**Y**ou don't have to be a race fan, or even an equestrian lover, to know about the Kentucky Derby. Held on the first Saturday of May at Churchill Downs in Louisville, the legendary "Run for the Roses" is the first leg of the American Triple Crown consisting of the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont Stakes. It's a world phenomenon that brings out fancy hats and mint juleps for all to enjoy. And for miniaturists, a roombox at the Kentucky Gateway Museum Center makes it an even better reason to celebrate.

Reminiscent of the '70s, the roombox conjures up memories of a decade when horse racing was a frequent news headline. Secretariat, in 1973, not only won the Derby that year, he broke a record on the track and became the first Triple Crown winner the country had seen in 25 years. The Thoroughbred stallion had a following known only by movie stars and today remains possibly the most revered horse that has ever lived. His owner, Penny Tweedy, became a celebrity in her own right that year, and even more so in 2010, when the movie *Secretariat* hit the big screen.

Looking into the "The Kentucky Horse Farm Library" roombox, you can almost imagine how Ms. Tweedy, or any owner of a Derby-winning horse, would be feeling after the race. A glass of champagne sits on the side table; an elegant lady's hat rests on a chair almost as if being tossed there in a moment of exhilaration. The Kentucky Derby trophy is displayed prominently on the sofa table—nearby delicate silver mint julep cups await pricey bourbon in preparation of the Derby's signature drink.

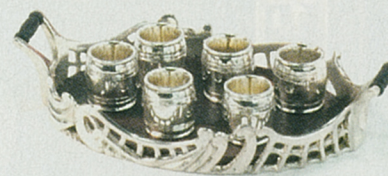
The striking roombox, located in the Kathleen Savage Browning Miniatures Collection, has seen its own amount of fame. It was displayed at the World Equestrian Games at the Kentucky Horse Park in 2010 in which 500,000 people attended. "It was such an honor to be asked to display the roombox at the event," says Kaye Browning, explaining that the invitation prompted to her to embellish the room a bit.

"The piece was originally created by Ray Whitledge as A Gentleman's Study," she explains, "and I added a few items to give it more of a Kentucky horse farm

feel. When Kentucky tourism officials asked me display it during the World Equestrian Games, I decided to make it more specific to the Derby and commissioned Pete Acquisto to create the trophy and mint julep cups, and Linda Young to make the garland of roses."

Linda, known professionally as Lady Jane, was beside herself. "Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that one day I would be commissioned to fabricate the famous rose garland in miniature," says Linda. She had been a Derby fan for years, but quickly realized the garland in miniature was not going to be "a bed of roses."

After doing research, Linda discovered that more than 500 roses of a specific type were used for the garland. "My biggest challenge in designing this garland was to be able to make a rose the perfect size, so that when 564 roses were adhered to my fabric, along with the outline of greenery, the finished product would measure a little less than 2 inches wide and 11 inches long," she says.



*In Kentucky, the month of May means one thing: the Kentucky Derby. So isn't it fitting that a miniature roombox is dedicated to the biggest event in the state?*

It took her three tries of petal sizes and "a lot of experimenting" on how tight to wrap the roses before she found the perfect technique. She determined the distinctive shade of red by buying herself a dozen Freedom roses from which she matched color.

The ribbon would pose another challenge for Linda, but not one that couldn't be solved with a road trip. The fabric used for the garland has a faint diamond design that had to be in scale, so Linda turned to fellow miniaturist and friend Alice Zinn. "She can do just about anything, so I jumped in my motor home and drove across Florida to Alice's, and we got to work printing that diamond pattern on silk until we got the right color and the right size."

Pete Acquisto would also be tested. The Arizona miniatur-

ist known for his silver and gold work had never made a trophy in his 45 years in the business. It would become the only trophy he would ever make. After doing research and analyzing photographs from the Kentucky Derby Museum's website, he scaled the design to 1-inch.

His repertoire of tools included a lathe, a milling machine, a flex shaft machine and a Little Torch, but he also meticulously hand-carved several aspects of the trophy, which he created using sterling silver and 24K gold gilt. "Soldering the reins on the horse and rider was extremely difficult," explains Pete. "The trophy took me three months to make and was one of the most challenging pieces I have ever done."

The mint julep cups were also time consuming due to the fine banding around each cup but

Pete, who works in thousands-of-an-inch preciseness, says he reproduced the pieces exactly to scale. "I am very pleased with the way they came out," says the well-known artisan whose work is featured in more than 20 museums worldwide. Many of his pieces are displayed in the KSB Miniatures Collection at the Kentucky Gateway Museum Center including a Limited Edition Federal-style coffee and tea set and mid-1700s epergne. Come May 2, however, the tiny one-of-a-kind gold trophy will certainly be the most talked about when the state celebrates its 141st Run for the Roses.

*Kathleen Savage Browning  
Miniatures Collection in Maysville,  
Kentucky, [ksbminiaturescollection.com](http://ksbminiaturescollection.com)  
for more information.*