

# Visit Santa's LITTLE TOY SHOP

Meet the real-life elf who brings the holidays to life in the KSB Miniatures Collection. By Sharon Doddroe.

~Photography by Kim McKisson

**T**he colorful glass encased toy shop is only one of the many holiday displays you'll find at the Kentucky Gateway Museum Center. Created by Linda Young for the KSB Miniatures Collection, it's filled with an extravaganza of miniature toys representing works of artisans from around the world.

**"And just like kids, once a scene is set up we both step back, jump up and down, giggle, and clap our hands."**

Linda, known professionally as Lady Jane, is recognized throughout the miniature community for her elaborate glass conservatories, plants, and other one-of-a-kind items, but this time of year it's her behind-the-scenes talents that take center stage.

As the assistant curator of the collection in Maysville, Kentucky, she is on a mo-

ment's notice a maintenance technician, electrician, carpenter, set designer, housekeeper, and doctor to dolls and miniature animals. She is a trusted confidante to the collection's namesake, Kaye Browning, and an interior designer extraordinaire in preparation for the holidays.

"Decorating for the holidays alongside Kaye is always so much fun," says Linda. "I travel to work at the museum four times a year, but fall is always my favorite time."

Kaye, too, is especially fond of the

**Top:** Assistant curator Linda Young decorating for the holidays at the KSB Miniatures Collection.

**Right:** David Daws' riding horse on wheels is reminiscent of vintage carrousels.



Christmas season and together they design and create new displays and decorate permanent exhibits. Starting in November, they unpack boxes and boxes of holiday items. Like Russian nesting dolls, carefully packed packages become smaller and smaller, uncovering decorated trees, wreathes, reindeer, wrapped gifts, mufflers, mittens, and miles of tiny lights that set the stage for Christmas.

"Kaye and I are like two





kids playing with our favorite toys,” laughs Linda. “Even though Kaye and I know what is coming out of the boxes, it’s still a thrill to see and handle these wonderful items. And just like kids, once a scene is set up we both step back, jump up and down,

giggle, and clap our hands. It never seems to get old.”

Linda, who has had her IGMA Artisan status since 1991, is especially skilled in all things lighting. Her particular knowledge dates back to the 70s when she formed her own company to do electronic

design and construction. She began working with Kaye’s collection quite by chance in 2007 while she was delivering one of her glass conserva-

**Below:** Linda’s specialty is the design and fabrication of 1:12-scale conservatories and greenhouses.







**Left:** The charismatic elves by Sylvia Lyons add a touch of mischief to the toy shop. The cross stitch samplers on the walls are by Janet Rosen.

each of her trips and also attends special installations and events held at the museum. When she leaves this time, the collection will be brilliantly lit for Christmas and shiny packages and other trimmings will be perfectly placed throughout the 3,300-square-foot gallery in the one hundred homes, room boxes, exhibits, and vignettes.

### Santa's Toy Shop

Linda's specialty is the design and fabrication of 1:12-scale conservatories and greenhouses, but when she stumbled upon a 1980's Hallmark Santa ornament in 1:12 scale, she couldn't help but be inspired. She removed the hook from his head and immediately began to envision a scene in which he would be surrounded by works from artisans she had befriended and admired over the years.

The shop, like all her glass structures, was constructed using the Tiffany method of copper foil and solder. "I individually cut each piece of glass, wrap the edges with copper foil, then solder the pieces together," she explains. "The roof on this piece was extremely time consuming but it was also very rewarding upon completion." The

tories to the newly founded Kathleen Savage Browning Miniatures Collection.

"The museum was scheduled for its grand opening and they were shorthanded with a lot of work that needed to be done, so I became employed as one of the installers of exhibits being brought down from Kaye's home. Working side by side with Bill Robertson installing, rewiring, repairing, and lighting the houses and exhibits was the

most fun I'd ever had," says Linda. "Once the opening was over, it became apparent that there was a need to have someone maintain and exchange exhibits to keep things fresh and interesting. That's when I was offered the assistant curator job."

Now almost seven years later, the Floridian artisan knows more about the collection and its inner workings than she ever imagined. She spends 10 to 14 days during



roof alone was comprised of approximately 250 separate glass pieces.

Linda also soldered in glass shelves along the front corners so the toys could be easily seen. She insightfully constructed the piece so that the entire side of the room can open on a hinge for easy access. For the flooring, she selected planked walnut. On

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top is a hand-sewn braided rug she created with DMC embroidery floss. All in all, the piece took a month to complete. And then came the fun part: selecting everything to fill the festive 14-inch by 18-inch toy shop.

"I'd found a wonderful tool box at a show (maker unknown) and then proceeded to shop for toys to stock my shelves," recalls Linda. " Sylvia Lyons' elves had the perfect character and Mary Bures made the most wonderful stuffed animals . . . Faith Rogers had all kinds of kids' toys and outdoor

gear on her table and I loved Ginnie Neil's whimsical Fimo animals and Diane Burger's porcelain piggy banks. Some items I had accumulated over the years not paying attention to who made them, so it was also a lot of fun to look through all the drawers and boxes in my studio to find what else I could incorporate into the setting."

When Linda returns in January, her life will seem to take a reverse spin as she packs away many of the items she recently took out of storage. Christmas packages will be replaced with heart-



**Above:** Linda had a blast stocking the shelves with toys from many different talented artists.

shaped boxes and flowering bulbs will begin to bloom in miniature yards and terraces. It's a routine she knows well, but never tires of. "I am very proud to be a part of Kaye's museum as her assistant curator, and even more proud that she has chosen many of my works to have on display," says Linda.

The KSB Miniatures Collection holiday exhibits will be displayed until mid-January. Visit [ksbminiaturescollection.com](http://ksbminiaturescollection.com) for exact dates. **AM**



