

Exploring Scale: Make a Miniature Leisure Scene

Ages: 10+ (Grades 4–12)

Duration: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Inspiration:

- *Derrick Adams: Buoyant*
- Red Grooms' *The Bookstore*
- Nybelwyck Hall Dollhouse

Materials needed:

- Shoebox or other box of similar size
- Scissors
- Paper
- Ruler
- Glue or tape
- Paint, markers, crayons, or other colors
- Get creative! Use **found materials** around your home (i.e. construction paper, cereal boxes, bottle caps, modeling clay, yarn, thin string (like fishing line), fabric scraps, buttons, etc.)



Part 1: Introduction

Artists often experiment with **scale** in their work. In art, **scale** is the proportion between two sets of dimensions (as in the relationship between those of a drawing and its original subject). Sometimes, an artist is influenced by the size of the materials that are available to them when they decide on the scale, or proportion, of their subjects to reality.

A drawing of a person done on an 8.5 x 11" sheet of paper is a **smaller-scale** version of that person in reality. A painting of a person that is part of a mural on the side of a three story building is an example of a **larger-scale** version of that person in reality. Artists may experiment with aspects of scale in other ways, by making a figure or object larger or smaller than it should be in a given setting or playing around with how a person or object may appear from different **vantage points**.

The function of **scale** in a work of art is both literal and symbolic. It may show the actual relationships among the visual elements in terms of their size, their relative distance from the viewer (**perspective**), or their importance in the story the image tells.



Part 2: Inspiration

The Hudson River Museum's [exhibitions](#) and [permanent collection](#) are an excellent way to observe how different artists consider scale in their works.

- Derrick Adams' **immersive series**, *We Came to Party and Plan*, is a **full-scale** installation of a party scene, with life-sized figures, picnic tables, and accessories. His exhibition [Buoyant](#) also includes a life-sized floor sticker of a bean-shaped pool as part of the exhibition design.
- Red Grooms' [The Bookstore](#) is another example of a full-scale immersive artwork, representing a mashup of a bookstore and a library interior and the characters inside it. Prior to constructing *The Bookstore*, Grooms made a small-scale model version, or **maquette**, of his planned artwork. He called this colorful, immersive type of artwork a sculpto-pictorama. Because it's full-scale, real, live visitors that enter *The Bookstore* become part of the artwork!
- In contrast to these works, HRM's [Nybelwyck Hall](#) is a small-scale, dollhouse version of a mansion similar to Glenview historic home, complete with furniture, household items, artworks, light fixtures, and a family of characters with their own story.



Clockwise from top left: Derrick Adams: *Buoyant*, Red Grooms' *The Bookstore*, Nybelwyck Hall Dollhouse, and Derrick Adams' *We Came to Party and Plan* series.

Part 3: Brainstorm & Discuss

Think about a setting where you spend **leisure** time.

- Do you spend your leisure time inside or outside?
- If outside, what is the season?
- Are you alone or with other people? What are you wearing?
- Are there any objects you use, such as a pool floatie or skis?

In this activity, we will be making a three-dimensional **miniature** version of how we spend our leisure time.

- Think about the **scale** of your objects in relation to each other.
- For example, if you are making a miniature pool scene, consider your real setting where, for example, the pool float is a third of the size of the pool. When making your miniature, you want your pool float and pool to be **scaled down** so that your miniature float is one-third the size of your miniature pool.



Derrick Adams (American, born 1970). *Floater 74* (detail), 2018. Acrylic paint and fabric collage on paper, each 50 × 72 inches. The Dean Collection.

Part 4: Procedure

1. Decide what leisure activity you want to be the focus of your miniature **maquette**. This can be a concert, a sports field, a pool, a beach, or any space where you go to relax.
2. Warm up by making a two-dimensional sketch of this scene on paper.
3. Begin to look around for found materials in your home that you can use to create a three-dimensional version of this scene. Gather as many potential materials as possible.
4. Make your maquette base. There are multiple ways to make a staging ground for your miniature scene. Be creative with the materials found around your house. Shoeboxes, cereal boxes, or any similar types of cardboard work great. A simple L-shaped structure is all you need for a staging ground.
5. Make your scene! Use different materials to create the background and whatever objects you would like to include. You can use modeling clay, Play-Doh, cardboard, paper, or any materials that you have to create objects and details for your **diorama**.
6. Remember scale when making your objects and background. Think about the size of your objects in real life, and recreate that size relationship in a scaled-down, miniature version.
7. Use construction paper, paint, markers, or scraps cut from magazines and newspapers to add color to your scene.

Share your work

Take a photo of your creation and post it to Instagram using the hashtags #MuseumFromHome and #Leisure, and tag @HudsonRiverMuseum.

Part 4: Procedure

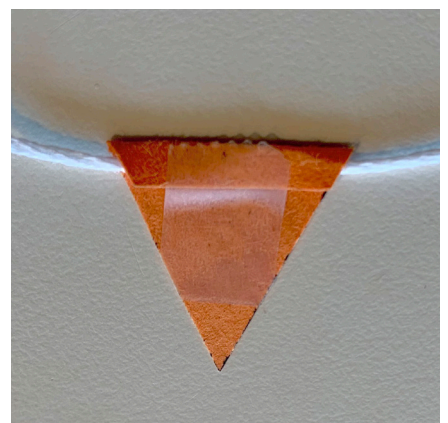
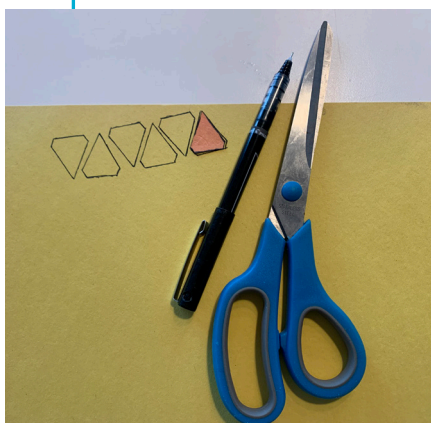
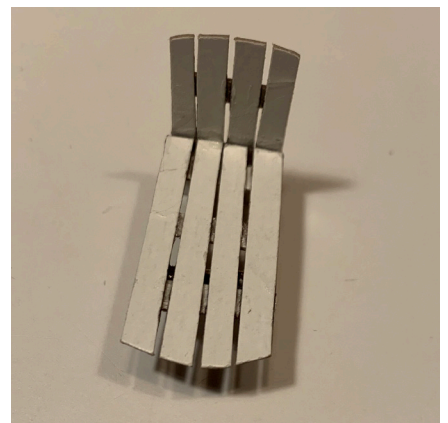
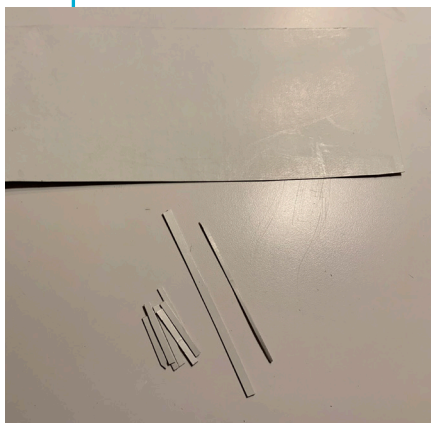
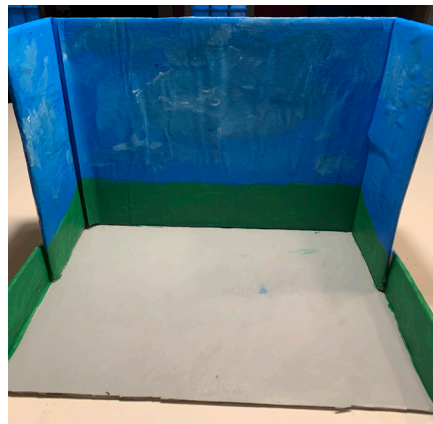
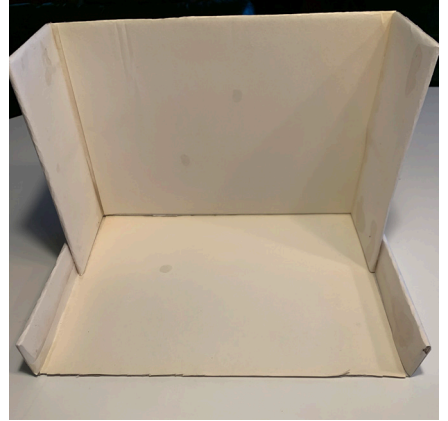
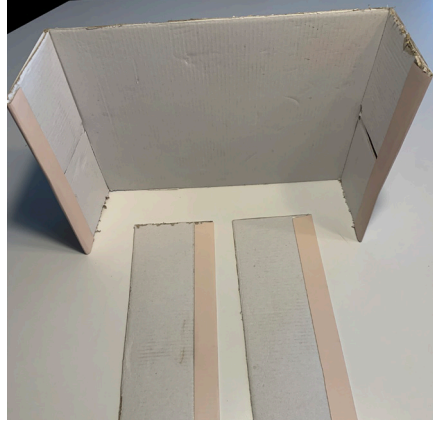
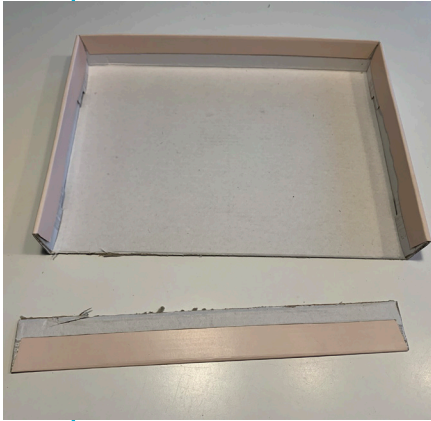
Extension: Metaphorical Miniature

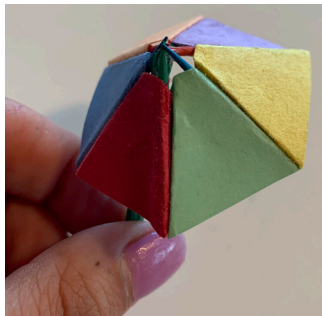
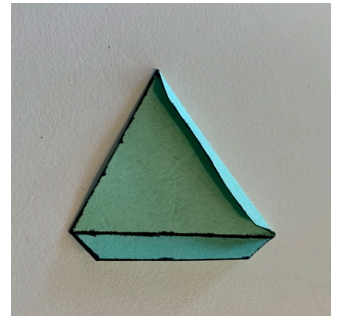
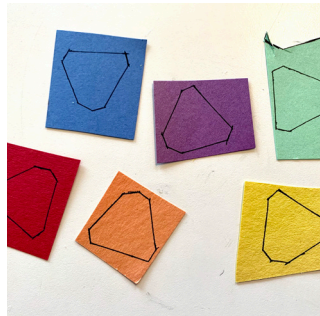
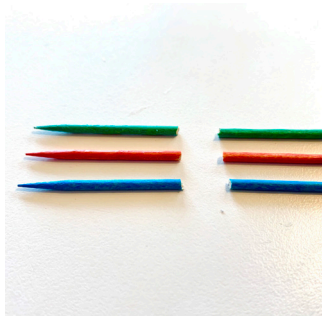
Your diorama will tell the story of the leisure activity you choose. Like the artist Joseph Cornell, you may want to emphasize certain significant elements in your story by enlarging them, or scaling them up. Other less important elements in your story could be scaled down, or shrunk. This scene will not reflect real life as it is seen, but more of how you feel about it.

This late work by Joseph Cornell incorporates items that he may have collected while beachcombing during a vacation in Westhampton: sand, broken wine glasses, and pieces of driftwood in mysterious shapes. Do you find a hidden meaning in their being put together in this box?



Joseph Cornell (American, 1903–1972). *Untitled (Sand Fountain series)*, ca. 1951–62. Mixed-media construction. Gift of the C & B Foundation, 1975 (75.22.1).





Part 6: Glossary

Diorama: A model representing a scene with three-dimensional figures, either in miniature or as a large-scale museum exhibit.

Found objects: In art, materials from which art is not typically made.

Immersive artwork: The creation of a world around the person in a way that makes them feel part of and inside of it.

Full-scale: The same size as the thing represented.

Leisure: The use of free time for enjoyment and relaxation.

Maquette: An artist's small preliminary model (three dimensional) or sketch (two dimensional).

Metaphorical: Something is metaphorical when you use it to stand for, or symbolize, another thing.

Miniature: A much smaller size replica than normal; very small.

Perspective: In art, the relative distance of a figure/object/detail in a work from the viewer.

Proportion: In a work of art, the relationship of the sizes of two or more subjects or elements.

Scale: The proportion between two sets of dimensions (as between those of a drawing and its original).

Scale down: An artwork that is smaller than the original subject in reality.

Scale up: An artwork that is larger than the original version in reality.

Vantage point: Point of view.