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MC GIRLS VICTORIOUS

PLUS SPORTS B8



SAUSALITO ARTIST MAKES MINIATURE EIFFEL TOWERS

PLUS LIFE B1

Francophile Susan Perry-Hinkle of Sausalito re-creates the typical sights of France with her handmade collection of miniatures



Special to the IJ photos/Jocelyn Knight

Susan Perry-Hinkle of Sausalito has created more than 60 unique miniature Eiffel Towers that will be featured in 'Leap Into Paris Gala' show and sale at Coquelicot in Larkspur.

VIVE LA PETITE FRANCE

By Vicki Larson | Marin Independent Journal

IF YOU GO

What: "Leap into Paris Gala" miniature Eiffel Tower show and sale

When: 6 to 9 p.m.
Feb. 29

Where: Coquelicot,
503 Magnolia
Ave., Larkspur

Admission: Free
Information:
924-0279; www.
ruedesuze.com



EVERY DAY Susan Perry-Hinkle looks around her and soaks in the delights of her idyllic French town; the boulangerie, the chocolate shop, the bistro, the florist, the Cafe des Artistes and the beckoning fruit peddler.

Lately, she's been seeing a lot of the Eiffel Tower — or, more accurately, lots of Eiffel Towers.

Perry-Hinkle doesn't live in France, which may be a good thing because she speaks only fractured French, she says. But her Sausalito home is filled with her hand-made minia-



Susan Perry-Hinkle uses a steady hand when placing tiny pieces into her miniature creations.

ture re-creations of the typical sights one might see in a small French village or a rue in Paris.

"They're here, there and everywhere," she says, laughing, of her numerous miniatures. "Wherever you go in my house, you see Europe."

When she stumbled upon a 1-foot tall balsa wood bird feeder shaped like the Eiffel Tower, Perry-Hinkle had an idea — decorate a different themed Eiffel Tower every day for a year, an admittedly big plan for someone who deals in the teeny-tiny.

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FRANCE: Making miniatures of Paris scenes

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Sixty Eiffel Towers, as well as prints and cards she made of them, will be on display and for sale (\$75 to \$125) Feb. 29 at Coquelicot in Larkspur.

The 57-year-old third-generation Sausalitan fell in love with all things French when she was a teenager and hired by an eccentric neighbor, Lillian Williams, to help her around her home — a 33-room, 100-year-old house that Williams, a friend of Luciano Pavarotti, had transformed into a personal opera museum. Williams and her husband, Robert, were importers of French country antiques, and eventually Perry-Hinkle worked at their warehouses and stores. They taught her how to restore antiques.

All along, she was absorbing French culture and slowly becoming a Francophile.

When Perry-Hinkle retired from racing outrig-



Photos special to the IJ/Jocelyn Knight

Susan Perry-Hinkle of Sausalito creates miniatures of French scenes, including one of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's studio.

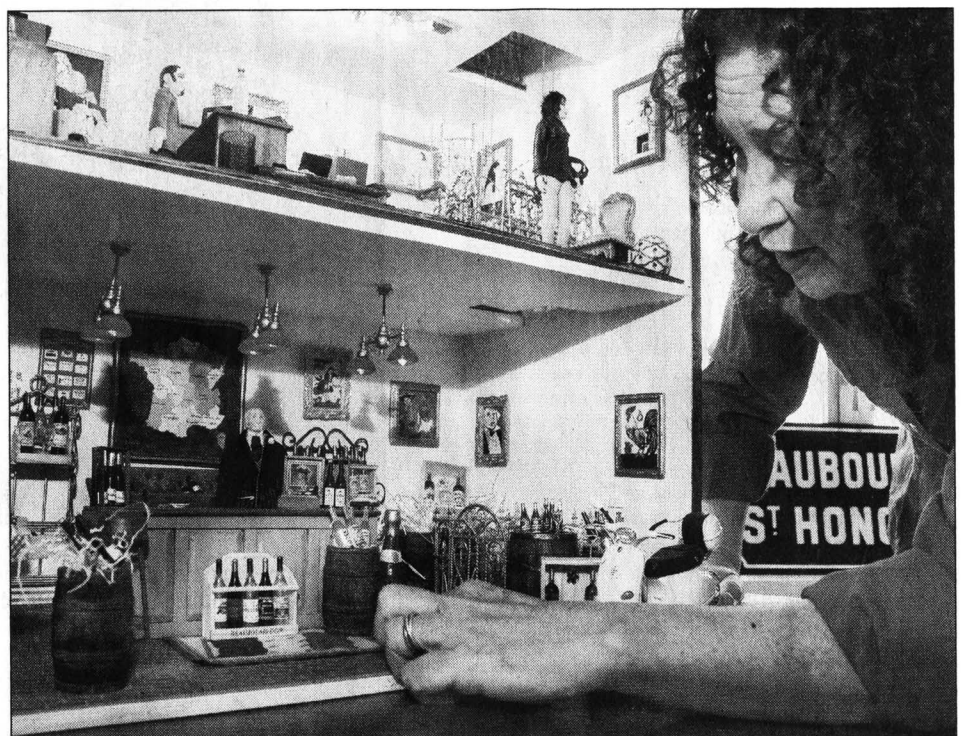
gers, a friend warned her that she'd be bored unless she found something to occupy her time. It was at that friend's house that Perry-Hinkle saw her first miniature, a Victorian house.

"I just went nuts over it, and I asked, 'Do they make anything French?' Well, no, I couldn't find anything French. So, I would look for things that I could change or create or

mold to the way I wanted it to be," she says. "I don't find a lot of people who do what I do."

Ever since she caught the bug for miniatures, she realized she could surround herself with the look of France even if she couldn't physically be there.

She made her first miniature, Bar Suze, measuring some 17½ by 15½ by 13 inches, about 10 years ago for a building contest



Susan Perry-Hinkle says creating miniatures is 'not a hobby for the faint of heart.'

sponsored by Shellie's Miniature Mania in San Carlos. She won second place.

She sometimes hires people to create to-scale objects and figurines if she can't find what she wants in shops, online or just scrounging around. A friend often builds

the shells, following her designs. But she also has developed her own techniques to craft the tiny street signs, pastries, floor tiles, plants and even bubbles for a bubble bath that make her elaborately detailed miniatures painstakingly realistic, down to the dirt and patina and dings of age — "I don't do pretty," she says.

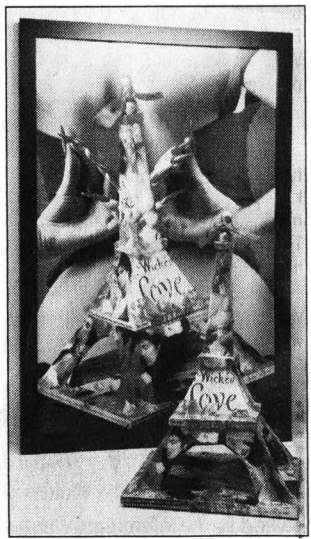
"This is not a hobby for the faint of heart, and you have to have a lot of deep pockets," she says, laughing.

You need deep pockets to buy them, too; her chocolate shop, with a Pierrot Gourmand candy holder, stained glass windows and commissioned chocolate paintings, costs \$10,000.

There are now 17 buildings in her Rue de Suze series and three in her artists' series, including a re-creation of Frida Kahlo's Blue House, several of which have won local and national contests and some built at the request of DollsHouse and Miniature Scene, a British magazine, and American Miniaturist magazine. In all, she's made more than 30 miniatures, each taking from three months to two years.

Perry-Hinkle stumbled upon the idea for the Eiffel Towers when she was searching for a miniature pot in a San Rafael crafts store.

"Out of the corner of my eye, I saw an Eiffel Tower. I forgot about the pot and beelined for the Eiffel Tower," she says. "I bought every one they had in the store."



Susan Perry-Hinkle collaborated with photographer Marybeth Adkins to create a poster and card series using her miniature Eiffel Towers.

Although she planned to make one a day for a year, she could only find 125 Eiffel Towers.

Some are decoupage with romance novel covers or old stamps or a map of Paris. Others are have been decorated to look like a chrome '50s diner, complete with jukebox, and a bride and groom. She had every intention to make all 125, but, she says matter-of-factly, "I had failures. I had some I thought were going to be just darling and when I was done I realized what looked great on 'big' did not turn out great on 'small.'"

Perry-Hinkle dreams of living on a barge in France one day. Until then, she still experience France — in miniature. "It's like taking Paris and shrinking it," she says. "It's bringing Paris to me."

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