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Craig Libuse • Museum director



Craig Libuse, director at the Joe Martin Foundation Craftsmanship Museum in Carlsbad, shows a miniature pistol from the collection. JAMIE SCOTT LYTLE

CARLSBAD

Making miniatures is no small feat

Museum features small-scale models of guns, planes, cars and working engines

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SPECIAL TO THE U-T

Pistols. Rifles. A Russian machine gun from World War I. Sounds like a subject for a gun-control debate. Except these guns are super-tiny and don't shoot bullets. They're part

of an exhibit of 90 miniature weapons on display until the end of this year at the Joe Martin Foundation Craftsmanship Museum in Carlsbad.

The items and many others at the museum exemplify craftsmanship — an intense commitment to de-

tail and precision produced in working miniatures.

“The challenge of getting these things to work is what drives the craftsmen to create,” said museum director Craig Libuse. “The skill involved is the same as that needed to build the real thing, except to a higher lev-

el because of the extremely small size.”

In 1997, Joe Martin, owner of Sherline Products, a machine tool manufacturing company in Vista, started a nonprofit foundation to encourage engineering, craftsmanship and

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FROM B1

small-scale metalworking projects. Martin also wanted a global audience to appreciate superior craftsmanship while encouraging future generations to pursue metalworking and design.

The Craftsmanship Museum opened in February 2011. It evolved from an online museum to a walk-in facility because of the unexpected large number of models donated from several hundred craftsmen. The building now houses creations from a diverse group of craftsmen, engineers and designers.

"It grew from an online to a real museum when people started asking us what they could do with nice projects they had built and had no appreciative relatives to leave them to," Libuse said. "We started with a few donated projects, and it just grew from there. Our first building was 6,000 square feet and opened in the Sherline plant in 2006. The new facility is 16,000 square feet."

More than 300 functional miniature engines are on display along with miniature autos, ships, cranes, tools and clocks. Some of the works include William R. Smith's Strutt epicyclic train clock and Rudy Kouhoup't's marine steam engine and other engines from his large collection. Young C. Park's 1/16 scale Corsair was sought by the Smithsonian and the San



Rows and rows of miniature displays are housed at the Joe Martin Foundation Craftsmanship Museum in Carlsbad. JAMIE SCOTT LYTTLE

Diego Aerospace Museum, but Park donated it to the foundation along with his model P-51 Mustang.

A solar-powered Victorian steam engine was designed and built by an engineer from Poland. It's made from brass sheets the thickness of human hair. It's so delicate that it's displayed inside a wine glass for protection.

Other items are tiny sculptures created by local aerospace engineer Ron Remsberg. His creations include the Taj Mahal, the Eiffel Tower, a paddle wheel riverboat, Notre Dame Cathedral, Big Ben and the Empire State Building. His works are built with matchsticks and Elmer's Glue.

Visitors can also enjoy and learn from a quarter-scale Corvette 327 engine from

the 1960s, a Ford Model A engine from 1928, and mini-airplane engines, such as a quarter-scale working model of the original Wright brothers engine. And the museum holds what might be the world's tiniest diesel model airplane engine, referred to as the "micro diesel engine." It has a displacement of only .006 cc.

Visitors also can watch a machinist as he operates inside the museum's machine shop. They can see steam engines operate on compressed air and view the activation of an external combustion engine, or "flame eater," from the late 1800s.

"Our first master machinist was Tom Boyer of Escondido," Libuse said. "He built the Seal and Howell 4-cylinder engines. Our current

master machinist is Dave Belt of Vista, who is building a Kinner 5-cylinder radial engine in miniature."

Farzad Varahramyan of Carlsbad has visited the facility several times and finds the museum inspiring.

"What Joe Martin has created with the Craftsmanship Museum is nothing short of curating one of the most outstanding collections in the world, of the highest in human achievement in the field of art and engineering," Varahramyan said.

The free museum at 3190 Lionshead Ave. in Carlsbad is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Visit www.craftsmanshipmuseum.com.

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