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*Toys, Trifles & Trinkets, Base-metal Miniatures from London 1200 to 1800.*  
By Hazel Forsyth with Geoff Egan, Museum of London, 2005.

In 1998, the Museum of London was presented with the collection of A.G. Pilson, consisting of hundreds of lead-alloy miniatures found on the Thames foreshore in the past decades. One of the conditions of this large acquisition was full publication of the collection and this is realised in this book by Hazel Forsyth and Geoff Egan, both attached to the Museum of London. They took the opportunity to include similar artefacts from the rest of the Museum's collections, and as there was not much literature, they wisely and widely used the few specialised articles (some by their own hands) and their illustrations.

The book opens with some very readable introductory articles about finding, collecting, conserving, producing and understanding base-metal miniatures. The lion's share of the 480 pages is devoted to a minute catalogue of 15 categories of miniature artefacts, from arms & armour to windmills, comprising 589 items (with occasionally more than one object per item). Each category has a dense, specialist introduction and extensive descriptions using beautiful photographs of every single item. This makes the book a real treasure trove of these small objects. With the plain classification and the useful index, this will be *the* reference book for miniature collectors, excavators and treasure hunters for a long time to come.

The aim of this book was to present an established collection of metal-base miniatures, basically without stating their function. Photographs of life-size objects, sometimes in colour, have been included for comparison, which is most welcome as it shows that miniatures follow fashion. But the metal objects are not placed in the context of miniatures in other materials like ceramics, or of objects within the same functional range in bigger sizes. That means that two small table twirlers now form an isolated category, with the only identification given by Dutch prints showing life-size wooden spinning tops. This combination grows crooked: the print could much better have been combined with an excavated wooden example from the same region. The same is true for many items, like a painting showing a wooden toy boat, while preserved examples are not taken into account. On page 59 it is said that toys like that do not exist in England, but they do in Holland, and there is no reason to let depictions from the other side of the Channel pass for English reality, but to ignore finds from the same background. To my opinion, that is the only flaw in this book: pictorial and textual sources from Western Europe that were merely coincidentally available have been combined with a given collection of London material. When the miniatures had been seen more as a functional category and had been confronted with miniatures in other materials and collections, the book might have given some answer to the important question of the function of these miniatures. Now, the imagery suggest that these things were made for play, but the text - and the title of the book - deliberately chooses vagueness. That choice is a chance missed, as a new opportunity to present miniatures in such a rich way may not come soon.

Two comments to conclude. There are many big mistakes in the titles of Dutch, German and French works of art; those could easily have been checked. And secondly, on page 7 the authors state that the "Collection of the Museum of London is unrivalled for its size, diversity and quality". But in the book, my 2000 article is cited and that presents a larger Dutch private collection consisting of over a 1000 (nowadays even 1400) of these objects, of the same quality and diversity, only - and interestingly - from Dutch soil. A full publication of that collection would be a complement to this book, full of opportunities for comparison... The availability of these *Toys, trifles & trinkets* will make that work much more easy.

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