
Goebel Miniatures

by Dick Hunt



Unique Collectible Sells in Five Figure Range

Goebel Miniatures "progressive sticks"
fetch unprecedented prices at auction and in private offerings

Goebel Miniatures collectors saw the market for rare, unique pieces reach a new plateau this summer when a buyer paid \$11,000 at auction for a set of production masters. Later, collectors plunked down prices as high as \$25,000 for other Goebel Miniature masters—known in the trade as "progressive sticks"—in individual, private transactions as the sets became available on the market.

A "progressive stick" is a group of six to ten figurines which the artist uses to demonstrate to employees how to prepare and decorate a figurine from beginning to end. The major stages of production are the bronze preparation, glazing, fine detail, features and final finishing.

After carving a new figurine, Bob Olszewski and Jane Ammann, his assistant, define and paint the figurine to achieve the final "look" and coloration he desires. Then Jane paints masters of the figurines, one to represent the ideal at each stage of production, for in-house quality control/comparison. Sometimes, with a complex piece, more than one

master might be needed for each department.

Goebel agreed to give Bob one of these progressive sticks for each of his Olszewski sculptures upon its retirement. To date, 28 have been retired.

To gauge their value, Bob decided to place *Down the Rabbit Hole* from the *Alice in Wonderland* series into a collectors' auction. After spirited bidding, the final sales price was an astounding \$11,000! Compare this to the \$500 current price for the five-piece *Winter Cardinal* and *Flower Boy* progressive sticks.

Soon afterward, all of the sticks were sold to collectors who had previously expressed to Bob their interest in obtaining a rare piece some day. The selling prices varied from \$1,500 to \$25,000, with an average of \$6,000 (depending upon the series, number of pieces on each stick, popularity of the piece, etc.).

A unique component of Goebel Miniatures' history is now in the hands of a few fortunate collectors. Will any come on the secondary market? Who knows? They were purchased for inclu-

sion into personal collections, but now you know about them and can keep your eyes open.

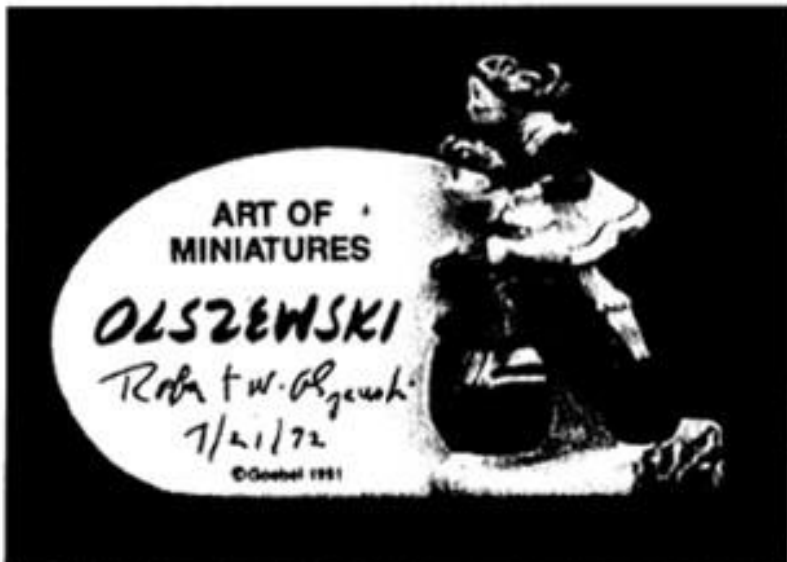
If anyone is interested in being on a mailing list for notification of any future rare items, drop Bob a note at the studio (4820 Adohr Lane, Camarillo, CA 93012), mention this article and express your interest. *

Variations in the "Summer Days" Plaque

The recent release of the Olszewski "Summer Days" Plaque included some interesting twists. For one, the first 1,500 pieces were dated and signed in script "Robert Olszewski" at the studio prior to shipment. Such a signing had never been done before. Bob would personally sign about 100 pieces at a time with dates between 4/28/92 and 9/9/92. The balance of this open edition will not be presigned and will not carry the exclusive first edition gold star.

The second twist came about virtually by accident. A variation occurred when Bob inadvertently dated about 75 pieces "1993" instead of "1992." After realizing the error, he mischievously decided to introduce four more variations. So he signed 100 pieces as follows: 25 signed in cursive script "Robert W. Olszewski," 25 in cursive script "Bob Olszewski," 25 printed "Robert W. Olszewski" (with the letters printed, as opposed to cursive), and 25 printed "Robert Olszewski."

Whether or not you can find one of these 175 variations, the astute collector should stay on the alert for one of the 1,500 first edition pieces. This concept of presigning and dating will never be repeated. Better look for that gold star now.



Of 1,500 signed specimens of the Olszewski "Summer Days" Plaque, this one displays a variation in the autograph that distinguishes it as one of only 25 so marked (see text).

DICK HUNT is a collector, dealer and author of *The Goebel Miniatures of Robert Olszewski, An Authoritative Reference and Price Guide* (\$14.95 at Goebel Miniatures Dealers or add \$1.95 shipping/handling to order from the author). Send questions to Hunt at 595 Jackson Ave., Satellite Beach, FL 32937, or call (407) 777-1313.