ANTIQUE TOY WORLD



FEATURING THE TOY & AUTOMATON COLLECTION OF PHIL & JOAN STEEL



Rudd Trowbridge's mechanical banks & bell toys, and Phil and Joan Steel's tin windups are prestigious headliners at Bertoia's March 24-25 Signature Sale



Highlights: Super-rare Uncle Sam clockwork perambulator, extensive collection of Martin toys, Chimpanzee bank, attic-fresh Voltamp Interurban trolley, European tin racers, top-tier cast iron

VINELAND, N.J. – Say hello to spring with the most anticipated auction of the season: Bertoia's March 24-25 Signature Sale, featuring two blockbuster collections and many additional high-end toy consignments. Rows of glearning showcases at Bertoia's New Jersey gallery are already filled to capacity with exceptional mechanical banks and bell toys from the Rudd Trowbridge collection, and Phil and Joan Steel's wonderful collection of French Martins and other tin windups.

The renowned Rudd Trowbridge collection includes several mechanical banks that are considered "musthaves" but are seldom seen in such outstanding alloriginal condition. No apologies are required for the pristine circa-1880 Kyser & Rex Chimpanzee bank estimated at \$25,000-\$35,000. The same goes for four J & E Stevens favorites. Both a Girl Skipping Rope and a boxed, football-themed Calamity bank are estimated at \$25,000-\$35,000 each. Two other J & E Stevens beauties, a whimsical Professor Pug Frog and a Panorama bank, boast all-original paint and fine condition. Each comes to auction with a \$15,000-\$25,000 estimate. A pristine Shepard Hardware Uncle Sam mechanical bank, with only minor wear at the character's hand from coin use. has a \$10,000-\$15,000 estimate.

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While on the subject of America's most identifiable national figure, Uncle Sam will take the spotlight at Bertoia's not only in the form of a coveted mechanical bank but also as the highest-estimated early American toy: a folky Ives Uncle Sam clockwork perambulator. Bertoia Auctions' president, Michael Bertoia, described it as "a once-in-a-lifetime find," adding that the toy was recently discovered in a wooden crate within an upstate New York real estate tax sale. "The crate of early toys had evidently been left untouched for decades, and to our knowledge, the perambulator we will be auctioning is one of only two known to exist, the other being the Blair Whitton blook example." Bertoia speculates that the toy will sell for \$20,000-\$40,000.

Other early American highlights include an Ives horsehead perambulator, \$6,000-\$9,000, three Ives walking figures from the company's series of nine designs, and a delightful array of bell toys in fine condition. The bellringing entertainers include a WH Chapman Drummer Boy, \$5,000-\$7,500; a Gong Bell "Ding Dong Bell" toy, \$3,000-\$5,000; a Fallows "Circus Rider with Horse," \$2,500-\$3,500; and a Gong Bell "The Captain and The Kids" depicting characters from the popular 19th/ early 20th century comic strip "The Katzenjammer Kids," \$3,000-\$5,000.







Those who enjoy the design and action of antique Fernand Martin windup toys are in for a treat at the March auction. The event features Phil and Joan Steel's collection, one of the nicest and most extensive groupings of Martins to reach the marketplace in years. "We have not seen a collection to match this one perhaps since 2017, when we auctioned the Frank Mohr collection. In fact, many of the best toys in Phil and Joan's collection were acquired at the Mohr auction," said Michael Bertoia.

The Steels' attraction to Martin toys unquestionably can be linked to Phil's occupation as an importer of mechanical instruments – specifically, precision parts similar to those used in watches. A Philadelphian whose ancestors arrived in America in 1730, Phil represents the third generation to operate Swiss Jewel Company – his sons are now the fourth generation. Members of both the ATCA and the MBCA, Phil and Joan collected toys for more than 40 years, always finding themselves most drawn to gravity toys or toys with a windup or clockwork action. When they discovered the French-made Martin series, they quickly became infatuated. According to Phil, their favorites were always the ones that had the most complex operation.

Among their prized Martins entered in the auction are: Le Gymnaste (Acrobatic Gymnast), \$7,000-\$10,000; Roller Skater, \$7,000-\$10,000; Le Gentleman Khaki (Boer War soldier), \$6,000-\$9,000; L'Intrepide Jockey, \$5,000-\$7,500; Le Cherif (Arab nobleman on camel), \$4,000-\$7,000; and Soldat Marocain (Moroccan Soldier), \$4,000-\$6,000. German-made Lehmann toys include boxed versions of the Mandarin, \$3,000-\$5,000; Baker & Sweep, \$3,000-\$5,000; and a Masuyama in its original box with a Marshall Field (Chicago) store label, \$4,000-\$7,000. A pristine Snick Snack, which depicts a gentleman walking two feisty terrier pups, is offered (unboxed) with a \$3,000-\$5,000 estimate. European automata include a Vichy Organ Grinder, \$7,000-\$10,000; Shell Game Magic Automaton, \$2,500-\$4,500; and more.

Other European standouts include a 17-inch Deluxe Carette limousine, \$10,000-\$15,000; an 8.25-inch Marklin limo with removable roof, \$6,000-\$9,000; a 17-inch Marklin JU-52 Lufthansa airplane, \$8,000-\$12,000; an 18-inch Fleischmann pontoon seaplane Dox, \$4,000-\$7,000; a 10-inch Bing double-decker bus, \$3,000-\$5,000; several Marklin boats, and numerous other vehicles.







An enviable selection of European and American trains includes what may be the nicest example of a Voltamp Interurban trolley ever to pass through Bertoia's gallery. Fresh to the market after being discovered in a clean, dry attic, it is estimated at \$12,000 - \$18,000. The railroad section also includes American outline trains and the only example of a Carette 2-gauge Vauclain engine and tender that Bertoia's experts have ever seen. Collectors can also take their pick from numerous Marklir accessories, which add a first-class touch to any train layout. Delving into the sensational cast-iron automotive collection, it quickly becomes evident that many of the pieces descend from collecting "royalty" – the Donald Kaufman collection, which was auctioned by Bertoia's in a spectacular series of sales held in 2009-2010. A circa-1932 Arcade Brinks Express truck is ready to speed off to its new owner and has a \$10,000-\$15,000 estimate. Other high-fliers in the fleet include a Hubley Packard Straight Eight sedan, \$8,000-\$12,000; and a large and extremely Kenton Speed Truck, \$6,000-\$9,000. Also carrying individual estimates of \$6,000-\$9,000 are two sought-after Arcade productions: a 'White' dump truck and 1932 Checker Cab. A 25.5-inch Ives fire hose reel is ready streak out the door for \$3,000-\$5,000.



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Cast iron will also appear in the form of figural doorstops. Two Bradley & Hubbard classics that are sure to find favor with collectors are the 13-inch Turkey, \$2,500-\$3,500; and the 16-inch Standing Rabbit, \$1,500-\$2,500.

Many other toy and bank treasures are waiting to be discovered at the two-day event, such as antique board games, racers with provenance from the collection of Bill Gelles, a Daytona driver; and a large grouping of penny toys that includes airplanes, motorcycles and articulated novelties.

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Bertoia's March 24-25, 2023 Signature Sale featuring the collections of Rudd Trowbridge and Phil and Joan Steel, with additional select consignments, will take place at the company's gallery at 2141 DeMarco Drive, Vineland, NJ 08360, starting at 10 a.m. ET each day. Live attendance is limited and by reservation only. Preview the week before the auction or by appointment only. Bid absentee, by phone, or live online through Bertoia Live or LiveAuctioneers. For additional information, to reserve a telephone line for bidding or a seat at the gallery, or to make a private-preview appointment, please call 856-692-1881, email toys@ bertoiaauctions.com or visit Bertoia's online: www. bertoiaauctions.com.



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