

ANTIQUE TOY WORLD



Annual Spring Auction
April 19-20, 2024



Just look at this list: spelter and cast-iron mechanical banks, cast-iron automotive and horse-drawn toys, animated cap guns; pressed-steel and tether cars, European automotive and wind-up toys, American, European and floor trains; and aviation toys of every imaginable type. Additionally, there are tinplate comic character toys, Japanese robots and space toys, soldiers and European figures; and a small but very choice array of holiday antiques. Every single specialty group harbors surprises that will delight collectors.

Let's break down some of the individual categories and their highlights, starting with the banks. Collectors were amazed at what was available to them in Part 1 of the Jim and Genia Willett German spelter bank collection (Bertoia's, Nov. 17-18, 2023). The couple had spent decades amassing their whimsical, ornately detailed banks, all of which rated very highly for condition. Now it's time to unveil Part 2 of the Willetts' holdings. In the April sale, expect to see whimsical animal figures, buildings and people as the banks' subjects, all on par with the high grades seen in Part 1.



The outstanding array of cast-iron mechanical banks is highlighted by a rare National bank, an ever-popular Trick Dog bank, patented by Hubley in 1888; a Hoopla bank, and a football-themed J&E Stevens Calamity bank.

Cast-iron toys will be in plentiful supply and are led by the Double Ripper sled bell toy that was formerly in the Max Berry collection, a very rare Musical Miners bell toy with its very rare original box, and a classic Ives Mechanical Walking Horse toy, also with its factory box. Other highlights include cast-iron racing-scutt floor toys in multiple sizes by several different makers. Cast-iron automotive toys are led by a fabulous Arcade shovel-nose gasoline truck, an ultra-rare Arcade Brinks truck, and a Vindex PDQ cycle. In the firefighting section, there's a coveted, near-mint Hubley Ahrens Fox pumper plus several early transitional fire toys, also manufactured by Hubley of Lancaster, Pa.



The horse-drawn cast iron category is a perennial favorite with Bertoia's bidders. The April 19-20 offering includes some handsome entries, such as oversize Ives wagons, a Pratt & Letchworth Boy Express wagon, a Kyser & Rex circus wagon and a Kenton Uncle Sam chariot. With crossover interest to militaria collectors, there's a scarce 2nd Regiment Ambulance wagon.

Cast-iron floor trains include multiple book examples from the legendary Rick Ralston collection. They will be offered alongside several original brass patterns. Other types of American and European trains, buildings and accessories will cross the auction block, with Continental highlights to include an example of the largest train station manufactured by Carette. Within the fantastic lineup of German Marklin productions are a super-attractive Pabst car, rare pre-war HO trains and accessories, and 1930s 0-gauge trains. An excellent thin-rim Lionel #5 engine and several boxed standard-gauge sets by Lionel and Ives await those who collect classic American trains.



Small but powerful, animated cast-iron cap guns are favored by many because of their novel appearance and the big impression they can make when displayed in even the tiniest of spaces. The auction will feature Shoot the Hat and Two Monkeys pistols, as well as a circa-1881 Ives Devil's Head cap bomb, which is a three-dimensional representation with horns, well-defined features and a fearsome expression.

A nice assortment of pressed-steel trucks in exceptional condition includes both Buddy 'L' favorites and boxed Smith-Millers that are new/old store stock. In addition, the sale features more than a dozen gas tether cars, including original and professionally restored examples in a variety of sizes and styles.



European automotive toys encompass several subcategories, including German wind-up cars, some of them hand-painted; while German and French windups range from Lehmann and Fernand Martin toys to finely detailed carrouzels and Ferris wheels. There are whimsical Gunthermann and Issmayer toys depicting both animals and human figures, and fanciful penny toys of all types. A highlight is a Meier Santa Claus, a Christmas crossover piece that every penny toy collector yearns to own.

Collectors of aeronautical toys may choose from the latest offering from the renowned Bob Davis collection. Early hand-painted German airplanes, Wright Brothers-style bi-wing planes, and go-arounds with an aviation theme will be up for bid in the April auction. Bob has very generously chosen to donate 50% of the net proceeds from the sale of his toys, in equal shares, to the Smithsonian's National Air & Space Museum in Washington, DC, and the New England Air Museum in Windsor Locks, Connecticut.



Comic character toys, with their distinctive colors and ingenuity, form a sizable portion of the sale. Expect to see the usual gang of popular cartoon and TV stars, like Popeye, Mickey Mouse and Howdy Doody. Many of the toys are accompanied by their original boxes.

Boxed Japanese tin automobiles, rockets and spaceships will cross the auction block, as will a rowdy Masudaya Siren Robot, which many space toy fans would be thrilled to add to their collections.

Distinctive Schoenhut (Philadelphia) wooden toys include four horse-drawn wagons, assorted circus tents, and a slew of animal and people figures. Also depicting life in a smaller scale are toy soldiers and other figures from the collection of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Oscar Hijuelos. (See sidebar for additional information.)



Bertoia's is synonymous with premium-quality holiday antiques. Their April sale will tempt holiday collectors with fine Christmas pieces such as a magnificent Santa Claus sleigh drawn by a large nodding reindeer, and many belsnickels and nodders. A massive rabbit candy container store display tops the Easter lots, while Halloween goodies include Halloween witch nodders, lanterns and much more.

The Bertoia family looks forward to greeting guests to their Annual Spring Auction on April 19-20, 2024, starting each day at 10 a.m. ET. Bertoia's gallery is located at 2141 DeMarco Drive, Vineland, NJ 08360. Preview the week before the auction or at other times by appointment only. Bid absentee, by phone, or live online through [Bertoia Live](#) or [LiveAuctioneers](#). For additional information on any item in the sale, to reserve a telephone line for bidding, or to make a private-preview appointment, call 856-692-1881 or email toys@bertoiiauctions.com. Watch for additional details about Bertoia's April 19-20, 2024 Annual Spring Auction online at www.bertoiauctions.com.



THE OSCAR HIJUELOS TOY SOLDIER COLLECTION

Collecting toy soldiers and a love of military history have always been inextricably tied to one another. It could be argued that displaying and enjoying an accurately arranged scale-model battlefield, with its commanders, soldiers, arms and artillery, is second only to having actually been present at a wartime event of centuries ago. That was how Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and history buff Oscar Hijuelos (1951-2013) thought about it.

Born to Cuban immigrants in New York City, Hijuelos did not have a privileged upbringing, but his loving parents encouraged his passion for collecting. Every year at Christmas, Oscar's father would take him to the legendary Manhattan toy store FAO Schwarz and let him pick one thing as his holiday gift. Oscar always chose a lead soldier.

The boy's intellect was recognized early on, both by his parents and teachers. His fascination with history was nurtured through his friendship with a neighbor, a philosopher who was involved with America's aerospace program. He was a font of classical knowledge who could speak Latin and knew Ancient Greek.

"Oscar absorbed it all – he was a sponge of intellect," said his wife, Lori Carlson-Hijuelos. "He became fascinated by history, antiquities and archaeology, and, as an adult, would work on many digs."

But it was writing that would earn Oscar both international acclaim and a place of his own in history. In 1983 he published his first novel, *Our House in the Last World*, which won the Academy of Arts and Letters' Rome Prize. His second novel, *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*, earned Oscar the distinction of being the first Hispanic to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1990 and was adapted for the movie *The Mambo Kings*.



As Oscar's star rose, he found himself in the position to acquire the things he loved, including the lead soldiers that captivated him throughout his life. He embraced the collecting hobby with abandon, attending toy soldier auctions, antique shows and conventions, where he especially enjoyed the "room-hopping" and socializing. With his ever-supportive Lori by his side, Oscar was able to live out his dreams, even visiting Malcolm Forbes' toy soldier collection, which was displayed in a Bedouin tent-style structure in Tangiers.

"That trip to Morocco was so interesting and so much fun," Lori recalled. "Years later, Oscar actually bought some soldiers from the Forbes collection when it was sold at auction in New York City."

The couple also visited and stayed in Italy every year. "As far as I know, we were the only Americans who ever got to see the Remigio Gennari collection, which was kept in the nobleman's palazzo."

Oscar's own extensive collection was never displayed in its entirety, but some of his favorite pieces were on view in one room of the Hijuelos' Westside Manhattan apartment. Over the years, celebrities in the couple's circle of friends would visit them and, invariably, they would be drawn to the soldiers, Lori said.

Manhattan apartments are notoriously short on storage space, so the soldiers that weren't on display at the Hijuelos residence were boxed up and kept in Oscar's studio apartment. Lori recalled: "It had become overwhelming. During the last decade of Oscar's life, he was buying every day. Boxes would arrive with regularity from dealers in England, Germany, France, and the United States. I think he loved having something to look forward to, just as he looked forward to receiving his Christmas toy soldier each year as a child."

Before Oscar's unexpected passing in 2013, he and Lori had been planning to purchase a home in Connecticut that would include one huge room in which to showcase the collection. Sadly, that was not to be.

Approximately one-third of Oscar's archival papers are now held at Columbia University, with the remainder in The Library of Congress' collection. As for his toy soldiers, they will soon be passing into the hands of the worthiest of stewards: Oscar's fellow collectors worldwide.

Selections from the Oscar Hijuelos toy soldier collection will be offered as a special highlight of Bertoia Auctions' April 19-20, 2024 Annual Spring Auction.





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 April 19-20, 2024
 Toys, Banks, Trains, Tinplate



Auction details at
BertoiaAuctions.com

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