THE ORIGINS, ARTISTIC PROCESS, AND LEGACY OF OLSZEWSKI STUDIO'S DISNEY STORYTIME COLLECTION



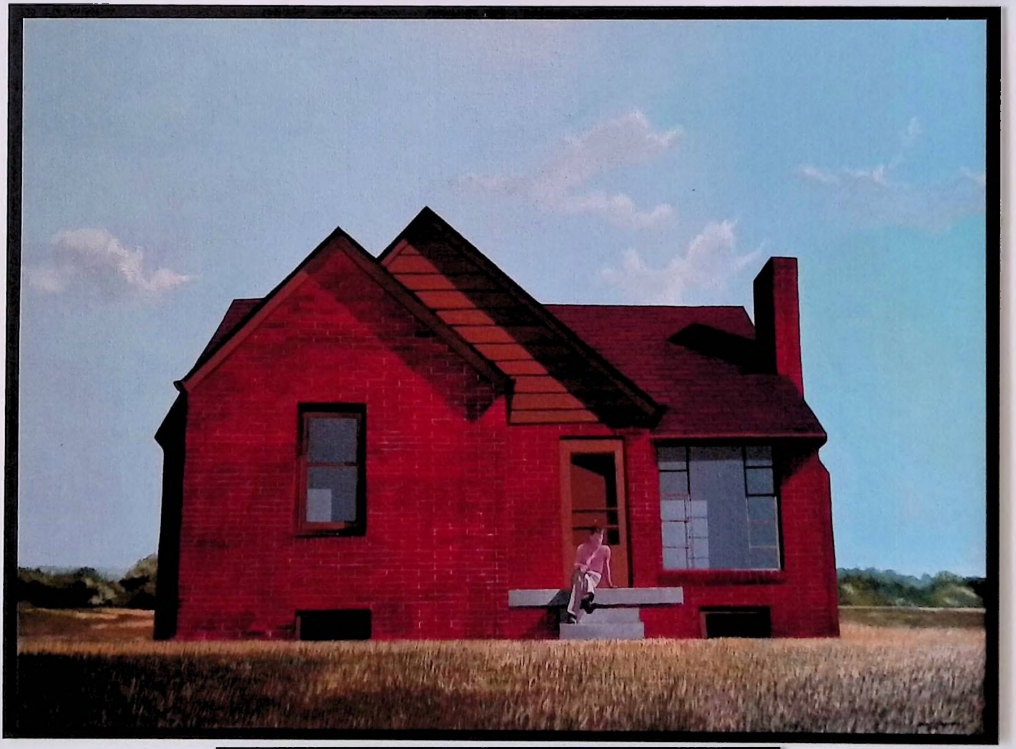
Storytime "Cinderella", Resin and Pewter, "Oh My Slipper", Released 2000.



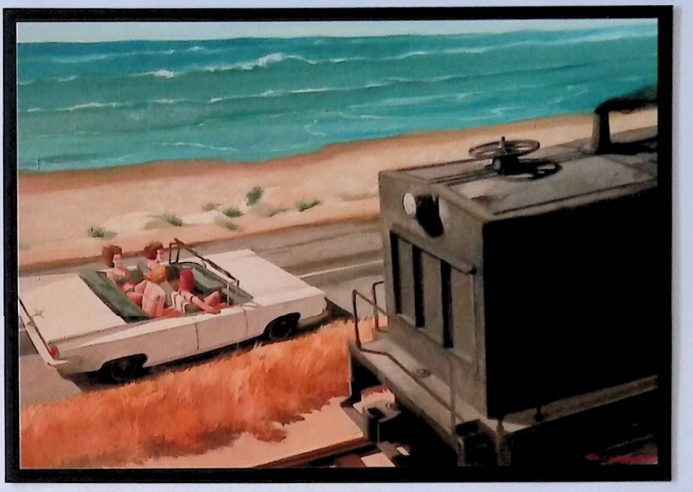
"All Disney images are copyright Disney"

PART 1, THE ORIGIN OF THE "STORYTIME" CONCEPT

The concept of Storytime came out of three very different experiences in my life. The first great experience happened when each night before bedtime, I would read Golden books to my children Meredith and David. As a young father it was a rich experience and each night we all looked forward to revisiting the stories while cuddled together, me in the middle, David on one side and Meredith on the other. It was such a wonderful and "new world of imagery" that on my time off work , I set out to expand our Golden Book library to find as many Golden Books that I could and ended up building a collection that we still cherish today. In contrast to this new world of fairy tales and before Meredith was born in 1973, I had produced a series of "memory paintings" that captured some of the saddest experiences of my life like the early loss of our Father which is pictured below and painted in 1970. When doing the "memory paintings" It was serious work and I was focused "inward" on myself, but now, being a new Dad changed my focus "outward". On the next page you will find, after 11 years of painting, my last painting, "101 North" which was signed the same year that Meredith was born. At the time I could not see the future but never thought that it would be my last finished canvas.



"Portrait Of My Father", Collection of The Artist, 1970



"Ocean Drive 101"
Collection of the
Artist, 1973

With this focus on our new family I stepped into a child's world of innocence and fairy tales. Each of us had our favorite stories and I especially liked the illustrations in the earlier Golden Books like "Scuffy The Tugboat" that was released in 1946, written by Gertrude Crampton and illustrated by Tibor Gergely. Shown below are two pages from "Scuffy The Tugboat" as illustrated by Tibor Gergely. This new way of looking at the world was so positive and uplifting that I used all of my energy to create a world of magic for my children. For Meredith I built a "Dollhouse" and for David I built a six by six foot "Hot Wheels City". Both projects were so much fun for not only my children and their friends but for myself as well. Little did I know that the "Dollhouse" would change my life and become my first step into the world of miniature.



"Scuffy The
Tug Boat"
Illustration by
Tibor Gergely
copyright
Golden Books,
1949

Once I started exploring the world of miniatures there was no looking back. At first I thought that I might make some income building in scale doors and windows but found that to be too repetitive. Next I tried building decorated miniature Christmas trees complete with a miniature train but couldn't get a fair price for the work (there is still one out there somewhere that is signed). Finally I looked for some figures to put on Meredith's bookcase, couldn't find any so I started to make my own.

So, some 2 years after my first miniature figure, I was under contract as a Master Artist and Co-Founder of Goebel Miniatures. Another big step came in 1987 when we were commissioned by the book company Grolier to create a work in miniature to celebrate Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarf's" 50th Film Anniversary. The success of this miniature concept was so strong that Goebel secured a license for more Disney films that included Cinderella, Fantasia, Peter Pan and Pinocchio, all which were released under the title Marquee Classics. It was an exciting time and following the format that I conceived for "Snow White", I created background displays for the characters of the films to be displayed in. Shown below is one of my favorite designs for "Cinderella". This work was created to take advantage of the lighting in display cases so that when the castle display is set right under the overhead light and pulled forward, the pillars frame the illuminated ballroom.



"Marquee Classic" "Cinderella", 1991

The second experience happened while I was doing personal appearances in gift shops which totaled 323 shows from 1982 to 1993. At each shop I tried to find the time to walk the aisles to see what was new. What I found was that when it came to Disney, most companies made products that focused on the most popular characters like Sorcerer Mickey, Tinkerbell, Snow White and Dopey. In my mind I thought, "What about all of the other characters?" and kept that in my thoughts for the future.

The third great experience was the knowledge that I gained from 20 years of interpreting fairy tales. After leaving Goebel, I re-founded Olszewski Studios and continued creating a line of fairy tales under the name "Storybook" which included "Goldilocks", "Hansel and Gretel" and "Little Red Riding Hood". With the three great experiences coming together in my mind, in 2000, I decided to apply for a license with the Walt Disney Company to create a new line of figures that would be called "Storytime". My idea was to tell each story from "start to finish", something that I had never done before, and I would illustrate each scene with a 3 dimensional figure. To further expand the concept, I would write a description of the scene, combine it with a photo of the figure which together would become a page for a book. Also to support the telling of the story, a page holder was made with a cover that featured the story titles so that when all of the pages were added to the holder in the same sequence of the film, the collector would now have their own storybook along with the figures to go with it. Shown below, the three elements of "Storytime" come together to complete the concept, the "Bambi Book", the page and the figure "Twitterpated".



HOW THE "LOOK" OF STORYTIME CAME TO BE

Developing how any collection is to "Look" is something that I have always given great consideration to. When it came to "Storytime" I fell back on the knowledge that I had gained through years of creating works in miniature and the influence of the works that I had seen on my visits to museums. From my first works in miniature in 1977, I was drawn to the beauty of European Figurative Porcelain and worked hard to try to capture the luminous quality of the white porcelain. To me the approach to porcelain is just like doing a painting because in a painting you start with a white gesso base that when dried, you can lay colors over it. When you start with a white base, the light rays, natural or artificial, will travel through the layers of color and will bounce off the white base and give the work a brighter and lighter look. Try painting the same figure on a dark metal base and you will readily see the difference.



"Spring Dance with Flowers" porcelain circa 1890
"Spring Dance with Flowers" miniature, 1996

THE SHAPE OF THE BASE

The next step was to decide on what "shape" the figures would be presented on. Knowing that in many of the Disney films, the characters were enhanced by placing them against the softer watercolor backgrounds, I knew that I needed to have that reflected in the "Look" of "Storytime". Having the piece being painted first in white was a good start to achieving the watercolor look but making a base shape that would help capture the transition from the soft edges to the character needed to be solved. Looking back at my earlier works like the base on the "Jack and the Beanstalk" which was influenced by the foot on the Soup Tureen shown below, gave me a good start in solving my approach.

"Soup Tureen" by Niderviller, 1760-1765





"Jack and the Beanstalk", 1993

The images on this page may look unconnected to the "Look" of "Storytime" but as a designer, the future is built on the experiences that you accumulate over time. In 1996, I started the first of three works which I called "Landscapes" because they were conceived as 'paintings' with the figures 'glued' into the backgrounds as opposed to the porcelain style figurines with no backgrounds or not glued in like the "Cinderella" set shown earlier. Shown below is the second of the three landscapes rendered in full color, and as shown below "The Gentleman's Fox Hunt" with all of the elements glued in. This painting approach was a major breakthrough in my thinking because now I was considering gluing the figures into backgrounds just like the future "Storytime" designs would be. However, before "Storytime" would be conceived, and because of my museum visits, I used the same original sterling masters from the "Landscapes" to begin exploring a new line of jewel boxes like the "Gentleman's Fox Hunt" Jewel Box which is also shown below.



Front
"Gentleman's Fox Hunt"
Landscape. 1997



"Gentleman's Fox Hunt"
Jewel Box 1997



Back
A little story in one piece...
the Fox gets away.

On my visit with the Disney Team to deliver the miniature "Ariel" and "Unicorn" that we finished for the Disney Classics "Enchanted Places" Collection, the team asked me about other projects that I was working on. At the time I was excited to say that I was working on a new Jewel Box line and shared some images of my progress. Intrigued, they asked to see the actual pieces and out of that meeting came the commission to create a work to celebrate the new Disney/Pixar film "A Bug's Life" of which only 50 were to be made and given to the top 50 people associated with the film which included Disney's President Michael Eisner and Pixar's John Lasseter. With the success of the "Bug's Life" commission, I applied for my first license with the Walt Disney Company to create a line of Disney inspired Jewel Boxes that were released from 1998 to 2000. The first set of Disney Jewel Boxes was the award winning "Cinderella's Magical Night" set which was released in 1998 and is shown on the next page.

"Ariel and Unicorn
Enchanted Places"





"A Bug's Life" Jewel Box
Edition 50 1998





"Cinderella's Magical Night" Set, 1998

THE R&D STEPS THAT DEFINED THE "LOOK" OF "STORYTIME





TOP: The Gold "Coach of Dreams" I used to paint the first "Oh My Slipper" Color Master.
LEFT: The cardboard oval I cut to make the first rough clay base.
BELOW: Smoothed clay on back of test piece.





The same base with added rough clay design and inset *Slipper on the Pillow* symbol for Cinderella's story.



This finished work with a decorative trim and soft watercolor like edge brings to a conclusion my search for the "Look" of "Storytime".

PART 2, THE PROCESS TO CREATE THE "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST" STORYTIME FIGURES

To maintain the quality and consistency of the "Look of Storytime" each figure will go through the same process. Also in this writing, please know that due to the rarity of the "Color Masters" and the "Artist Proofs", in order to present a clear explanation of the process, I have had to substitute images from other stories when necessary. The first step is to really know the story and to do this I watched each film over and over and took notes at each viewing. On the next page, you will find the final analysis of the "Beauty and the Beast" film. At the top of the page you will see the first notation that selects the *Rose* to be the symbol of "Beauty and the Beast" and nods to the fact that for each Disney film, a different symbol will be selected to represent the story which will then be sculpted into the decorative edge of each design. Also on the summary page, you will see that the story is organized from start to finish along with an assessment of a scene and it's complexity which are noted as follows, "S" for a Simple scene, "M" for a Medium scene, "C" for Complex and "HC" for a Highly Complex scene. Also following each scene is the year the design was released along with DC which stands for Disney Classic followed by the design number which is the sequence in which the design was released as in number 1 to 97 or DC63. Last, at the bottom of the summary, you can see that I noted that it would take 18 designs to tell the complete story of "Beauty and the Beast". Shown below are the six "Beauty and the Beast" designs that we finished and released from 2001 to 2006.



The complete set of the six "Beauty and the Beast" designs that were released.

"BEAUTY AND THE BEAST" "ROSE"

SYMBOL ON BASE EDGE

		YEAR ISSUED	ALL DESIGNS LTD ED 1500 / OS DC / OLSZEWSKI STUDIO DISNEY COLLECTION
A. STAINED G/ASS WINDOW	HC		
B. BELLE TO TOWN	HC		
1. AT FOUNTAIN	M		
2. AT BOOKSTORE (SIGN REAR)	S	2005	DC 78 "ANOTHER WONDERFUL STORY"
3. GASTON AND MIRROR	M		
C. DAD INSIDE CASTLE / DAD ON PHONE	C		
1. BEAST AND DAD	M		
2. PLATES AND DISHES	M		
3. BEAST / BELLE TO ROOM	/		
4. GASTON IN CHAIR	C		
5. BEAST WAITS AT FIRE	/		
6. " POUND ON DOOR	/		
7. Belle ALMOST TOUCHES ROSE	C	2006	DC 94 "THE SECRET ROSE"
D. Belle ATTACKED BY WOLVES	(HC)	2004	DC 63 "BEASTLY FIGHT"
1. Belle HEALS BEAST	(M)	2001	DC 32 "TENDER 4. BELLE HEALS THE BEAST"
2. BIG LIBRARY	HC		
3. DINE TOGETHER	HC		
4. FEED BIRDS	C		
5. BEAST TAKES BATH	/		
6. DESCEND STAIRS	HC		
7. THEY DANCE	HC	2005	DC 86 "FIRST DANCE"
8. OUT TO STARS	HC		
9. I LET HER GO	/		
10 LUMIERE SAVES FEATHER DUSTER	(M)	2002	DC 40 "MY HERO"
11. GASTON STABS BEAST	/		
12. THEY DANCE	M		

DESIGN KEY	PLAN	RELEASED
S = SIMPLE	0	0
M = MEDIUM	1	2
C = COMPLEX	3	2
HC = HIGHLY COMPLEX	8	2

"STEP 1, "THE SUMMARY PAGE TO HELP LEARN THE FILM"

18 | 6

STEP 2, START WITH A QUICK SKETCH for "A Secret Rose"

Once I have a scene selected, I always start with a quick sketch. The purpose of a rough sketch is to allow me to decide if the piece should be free standing with no background or if a scene is better served with the figure set into a background. For this work, "The Secret Rose", I was confident that I had enough information to begin sculpting.



Bob's Rough Sketch





The Secret Rose Clay Master

STEP 3, THE FIRST WHITE CLAY ROUGH FOR "A BEASTLY FIGHT"

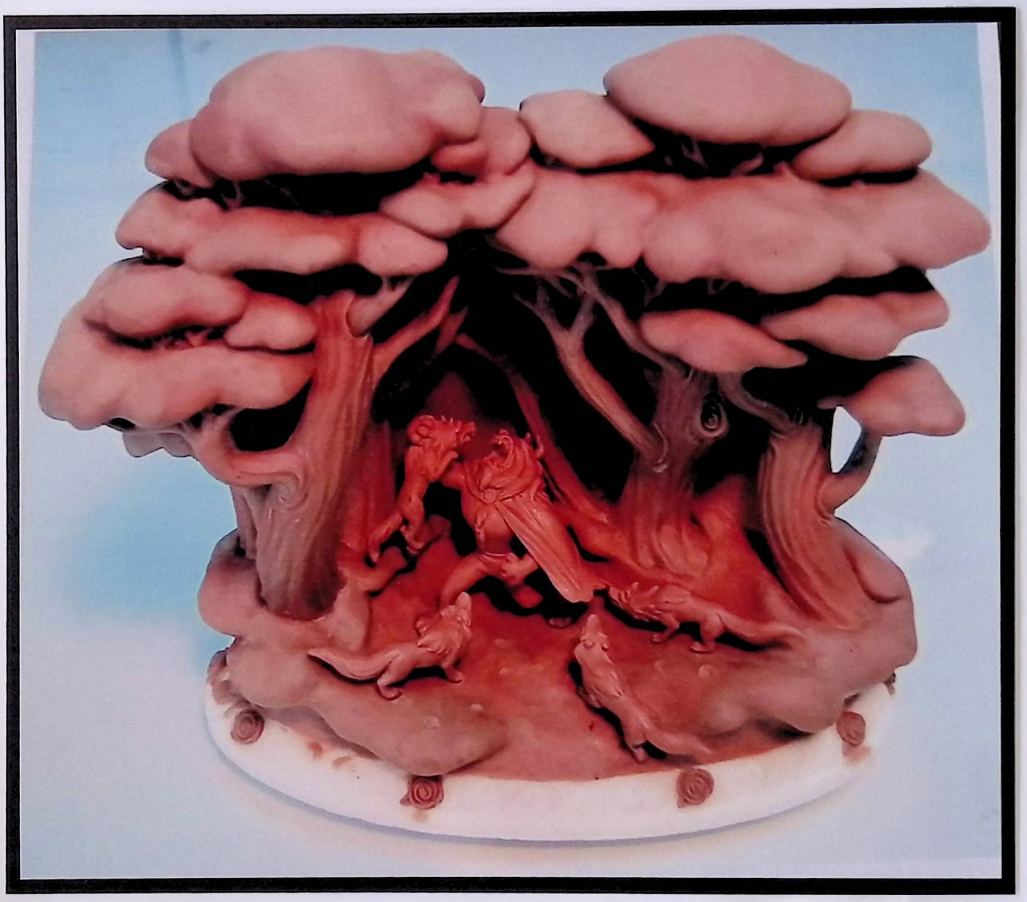


For more complex works like "A Beastly Fight" I will do a rough of the scene in a white clay. Once I am satisfied with the rough, I will work with one of our sculptors and will oversee their progress to make sure that the clay model meets the Disney team's standards. On the next two pages you will see the evolution of this work. Some things to notice are how the shapes and sizes of the trees change as well as the positions of the wolves. Later, even when we get to the final color masters you will see more adjustments that I made to the position of the wolves. Notice that I roughed this work out on an existing "Peter Pan" base as seen by the *Star* that is sculpted in the base trim which we will later change to a *Rose*.



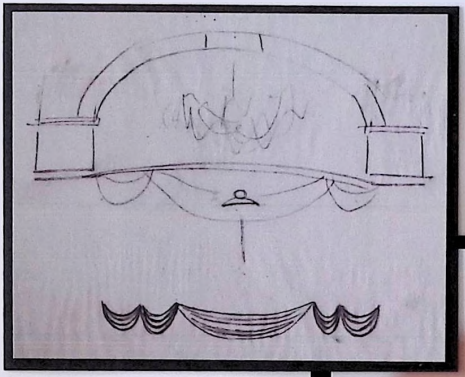
In this second image, the trees limbs have more detail and the wolves are starting to take shape.

STEP 4, SCULPT THE FINAL MASTER IN RED CLAY

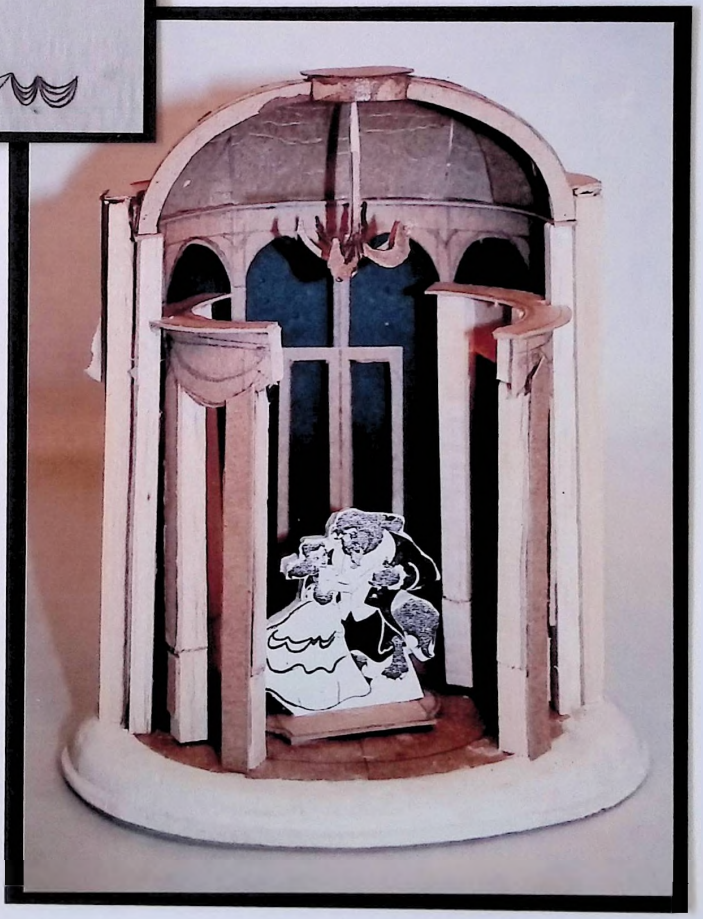


Once we have worked out our approach in the white clay rough,
we will sculpt the final master models in a red clay. We use red clay because it is soft
enough to shape when the clay is warm yet strong enough to cut in the details when the the clay is cold.

In this work, "First Dance", rather than working in white clay, I laid out the design on graph paper and used foam core and cardboard to create a rough mock up so that I could understand how the "First Dance" model would fit together.



My first sketch.
View of the Ballroom
from above.







Shown above is the 15 part "First Dance" clay master. Note: the chandelier is not included.

STEP 5, MOLDS ARE MADE ON EACH PART

Once the red clay master is approved, molds are made on each part. This first mold is called the "Mother Mold" from which 6 sets of the model are cast. Two sets are held in our studio for painting, another two are for the studio overseas to paint and the last two castings will become the "Production Masters". The production masters will be cleaned up and once perfect, a final mold will be made on them to make the pieces for the production run. It is at this point, because the production is from a second mold, the pieces will be 4 to 6% smaller than the first six pieces from the "Mother Mold".

STEP 6, COLORS ARE MIXED TO PREPARE FOR PAINTING

For each film story hundreds of colors are mixed and tested. When we are certain that we have a color match, a final color card is made that includes the name of the figure plus the part of the figure the color is used on. Also, on the same card, a color swatch is applied and a recipe, weighed in grams, will be written on the card to be used later in the production process. Also, in order to maintain consistency in the "Look" of the collection, all color cards are filed for future use and those same colors will be used on the same character if that character appears again in another part of the story.



A color card for Christopher Robin's shorts and for Belle's Dress.

STEP 7, PAINTING THE COLOR MASTER

Once the colors are mixed and we have the first castings in hand, my wife Eva and I will begin painting two "Color Masters". Eva will paint the characters and I will paint backgrounds. One is sent to the studio overseas and the second Color Master will be held in our studio. Shown below on the left is the Color Master for the "Bambi" Storytime piece, "Wake Up Flower". Since the Color Masters are from the first Mother Mold, as noted earlier, they are always larger than the later production releases that are shown below on the right.



Left, "Bambi" Color Master, Right, The Smaller Production Release.



STARTING OVER AND REPAINTING THE COLOR MASTER



This is not a formal step but it does happen. Shown above is our first approach to painting the Color Master for "First Dance". Since we only have two castings to work on, we will need to strip the paint off the areas we want to change and we will repeat the repainting until we arrive at the best look for the piece. I am so glad that we have this photo of our first try as it is fun to compare the difference between our first attempt and the final "Look" that is shown on the next page.

"FIRST DANCE", COLOR MASTER TWO WITH CHANGES



"First Dance" The second painting approach and the final "Look" of the production pieces. Notice that the only thing we changed was the color of the outside pillars and what a difference that one change made.

STEP 8, APPROVING THE ARTIST PROOF THAT WILL "QUALITY CONTROL" PRODUCTION

When the overseas team receives our Color Master They will paint the two copies, one for them to keep and one to send back to us for inspection. This second copy is called an AP or Artist Proof and will be labeled, "First Sampling" or even "Second Sampling" until they get it right. These will be signed in India Ink by myself as AP's 1/2 or Artist Proof 1/2, Olszewski and will also be larger than the production releases.





Left, The "Secret Rose" Artist Proof, Right, The Smaller Production Release.

STEP 9, DECIDING THE BEST USE OF THE PEWTER AND RESIN MATERIALS



"Oh My Slipper" with a "Pewter" Base.



"Oh My Slipper" with a "Resin" base (my final choice for production).

STEP 10, PHOTOGRAPHING THE FINAL MODEL

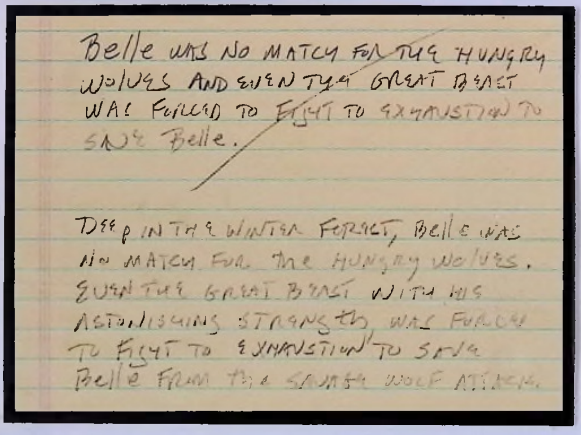
With so much effort to bring a piece to completion, I always want the final photos to reflect my view of the finished work. In every photo session, once the lighting is set, the next step is to place the figure square to the camera. This was not mentioned earlier but in Step 2 when I first select the base size, I am also aware of the shape of the base, which can be an oval or round shape and never a square shape as I want the "Look" of Storytime to be *soft*. Recalling my selections for the base shapes, ovals were always my first choice because as seen in the image below, an oval naturally demands that it sits square to the camera and the viewer, which gives me some control on how the piece is to be seen. Next and very important, is the "height of the camera angle". If the piece is photographed at eye level, a part of the landscape that adds to the story will be cut out. However, if the camera is raised just a little, the landscape and the soft watercolor edge will be included in the final image just as I intended. Shown on the next page is a comparison of the two views. The postcard image was taken in a photo session I was not able to attend and the "Beastly Fight" photo to the left presents a higher and better view of the figure.

The oval shape set square to the viewer.

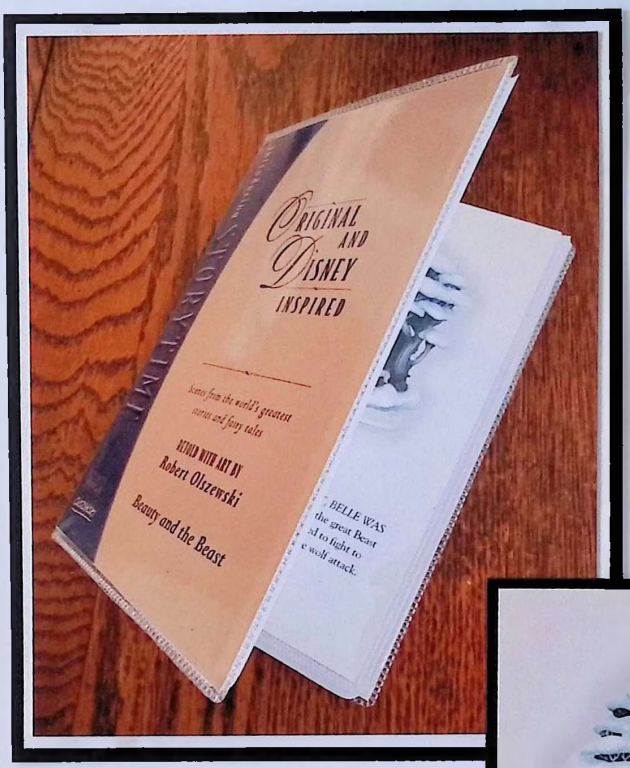


STEP 11, WRITING THE POSTCARD STORY

Once I have the photographs, I will refer back to the summary page in Step 1 for a refresh, which will insure that the words I write for the postcards will flow smoothly from page to page.



Bob's first rough and final version for the "Beastly Fight" scene and post card as shown on the next page.



"The Story Page and the "Beauty and the Beast" Book.



A Better View



DEEP IN THE WINTER FOREST, BELLE WAS no match for the hungry wolves. Even the great Beast with his astonishing strength, was forced to fight to exhaustion to save Belle from the savage wolf attack.

STEP 12, CREATING THE FINAL PRODUCTION LABELS AND THE NAME "OLSZEWSKI"

The name OLSZEWSKI can be pronounced in two ways, the Americanized "OL-SHES -SKI" or from the old world "OL-CHEF-SKI" like a CHEF in a restaurant. Earlier in my life I was known as "Red" because of my hair color and also a shortened nickname for my last name "Chez" which would have simplified the issue of pronunciation if I had used it. However, because of the early loss of our father, William Vance Olszewski, to honor him, I made it a point to sign my work with the complete family name OLSZEWSKI and to accept that the mispronunciations would continue. Also, to make sure that the spelling of the name OLSZEWSKI would be clear to the viewer, I have made it a point to always sign my name as legible as possible.

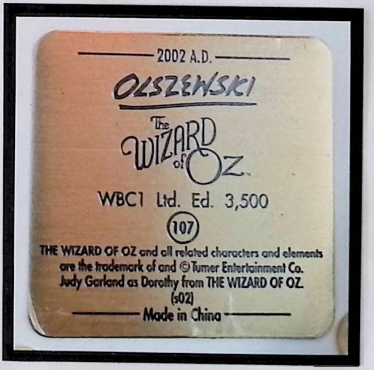
Taking the time to create the label for each Storytime piece is important because the label is packed with information that has to be historically correct. Shown below on the right is the gold label that is attached to the base of the "Storytime", Beauty and the Beast release, "The Secret Rose", and on the left is an explanation of what each entry represents.

1) by OLSZEWSKI, The name of the artist that created the work.
2) STORY-TIME, the name of the collection.
3) WALT DISNEY SHOWCASE COLLECTION, and copyright Disney. The Storytime collection is based on scenes from the Disney Classic Films and is the property of the Walt Disney Company.
4) OSDC94, Olszewski Studios, Disney Classic and the 94th release in the sequence of 97 total storytime designs.
5) 2006 A.D. The year the design was released.
6) Limited Edition 1500. The most that will be made.
7) 183, this is my 183rd design since refounding the new Olszewski Studios in 1994.



What the entries on the labels represent.

The Storytime collection included	
Disney Classic film designs	97
Wizard of Oz film designs	3
Total storytime designs	100



STEP 12 CONTINUED, HOW I SEE SETTING THE SIZE AND PRICE OF THE LIMITED EDITIONS

Before the Gold Label can be made, the size and the issue price of the limited editions needs to be determined. To set the issue price and the edition size, the first consideration is the "Look" of the work itself. HC or Highly Complex scenes will be priced higher than a S simple scene. Second, if a work features a popular scene and includes a popular character, both the price and the edition size will be higher than for a minor scene or character. Besides the appeal of the piece, the size of the market is also something that I consider, which for the Disney Classic Films is world wide. Also, although 1500 is the stated edition size and the most that can be made, it does not mean that we produced the entire edition. Instead, in order to avoid having too much in inventory on hand especially as we were nearing the end of the contract, we opted to run production in groups of 500 which means that only 500 or 1,000 pieces were actually made which is why some designs are harder to find than others. Shown below is a breakdown of how the maximum edition of 1500 for "The Secret Rose" was distributed. Cut the actual numbers produced to a thousand or less and see how that effects the distribution. An Edition of 1500 leaves 30 designs per state, 1000 leaves 20 per state and 500 leaves 10 designs per state.

"The Secret Rose"
Issue Price: $110.00
Edition: 1500
Sold at:
600 Collectible Shops. Maximum 2.5 each,
Minus what our larger accounts sold.
Disneyland
Disney World
Tokyo Disney
Knott's Berry Farm
50 U.S. States. Average 30 per state.



The Secret Rose, a "C" Complex piece.

STEP 13, TWO WAYS TO HAVE A PIECE SIGNED.

The first way to have a piece signed is to catch me at a show. When I meet collectors at a show I feel honored, because I know that they have traveled away from home to spend a moment chatting and sharing thoughts with me while I sign their pieces. Signing at shows over time has been the start of many lifelong friendships.

If you can't make it to a show, the second way to have a piece signed is to purchase a work from our store site. If you do, you are making a choice to support the artist directly and you can be sure that it is much appreciated. As a small "Thank You", and before signing, when an order comes in I will personally look over each piece and I will test the lighting if needed. Taking the time to inspect and sign each work insures that the piece you purchased meets the standards that were set when I created the original work.

A word on the OLSZEWSKI signature. From the beginning of my career, I have made certain that when signing my name that it would be legible so that their would be no doubt as to who created the work. In the "Pre Goebel" Era, I signed each work with a brush. Starting in the "Goebel Miniature" Era, I switched to signing with India Ink using a rapidograph pen. During that time I also experimented with permanent markers but found that they fade over time and have never used them again. Today I still sign with India Ink because it never fades and the signatures from 1980, are the same as when I signed them some 46 years ago. Last, when signing, I prefer to sign on the back right side but will sign on the left if I feel that it hides the signature better from being seen from the front. The next photos show the signature on the back of "The Secret Rose" of which I estimate that less than 10 of this work out of the 1500 have been signed.



Signing a micro "Poultry Seller" in India Ink with a Rapidograph Pen



A signed Secret Rose



The signature enlarged

THE COMPLETE COLLECTION OF THE "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST" DESIGNS

Creating the Storytime Collection gave me a deep appreciation for each of the Disney Classic films that I interpreted. Before Storytime, I knew the characters and films as a fan, but after analyzing each of the films in depth I came to appreciate not only the characters but also the background art, the individual films color palettes and the storylines. After bringing Storytime to an end, this knowledge stuck with me and showed up in the 4 "Beauty and the Beast" designs that I did after Storytime. In all, the total number of designs that I did based on "Beauty and the Beast" totals 10 and on the following pages they are listed by the year and in the sequence that they were released. Also notice that with the Beauty and the Beast collectors in mind, except for converting the Storytime 2005 "First Dance" into the 2007 Gallery of Light "One Wondrous Waltz", I made certain that when creating new works I made it a point to introduce new elements of the film that were not included in the Storytime collection which means that if one were to purchase all 10, they would be closer to having the complete Beauty and the Beast story.



Storytime, "Tenderly, Belle Heals Beast", released 2001



Storytime, "My Hero" released 2002



Storytime, "Beastly Fight", released 2004



Storytime, "Another Wonderful Story", released 2005



Storytime, "First Dance", released 2005



Storytime, "The Secret Rose", released 2006



Gallery of Light, "One Wondrous Waltz", released 2007

THE BEAUTY AND THE BEAST HEIRLOOM BOX, RELEASED 2009

When I created the Beauty and the Beast Heirloom Box, my goal was to show how the characters hung as the story unfolded. Shown here are the first of three images.



Back panel, "The Spell is Cast"



Front panel, "Belle Brings Hope"



Inside,"The spell is broken and everyone is transformed"

Pokitpal, "Belle" in the mirror, released 2012



Front left, Back right



Gallery of Light, "Fireside Romance", released 2012

CONCLUSION: STORYTIME HAD TWO MAJOR IMPACTS ON MY CAREER

The first creative impact was how I interpreted the scenes in the films and how that changed over time. On page 30, I noted that each work has a label that carries a mark, DC is followed by a number which is the sequence in which the figure was created as in DC1 to DC97.
Even if you have a just a part of the collection, line them up in the order of the numbers and you can see a change in how I was seeing new ways to present a film scene which later evolved into the "Gallery of Light" concept.



Storytime, Winnie The Pooh
DC1 "Fireside Thoughts"
released 2000



Storytime, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, DC91
"Everything is Going To Be Alright" released 2006



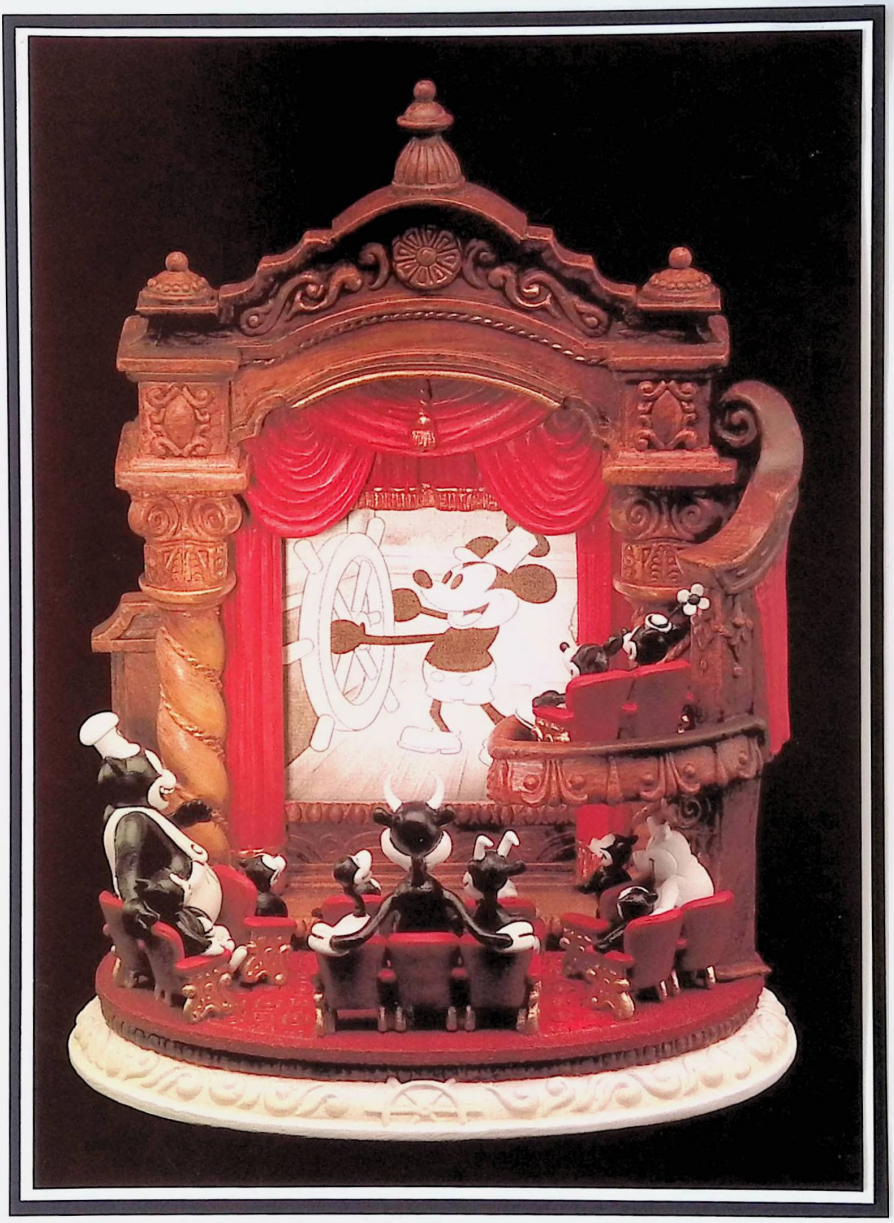
4 of 33 Enchanted Places including Steamboat Willie playing a washboard

The second impact was how my work on Storytime opened up new opportunities and changed how "The Art of Miniature" was perceived. While working on the "Enchanted Places" and the beginning of the "Storytime" collection we made many visits to meet with the Disney Team and during a visit in early 2000 I was asked if I would be interested in doing a work for the upcoming 2001 Disneyana Convention. The concept was to create a miniature of Steamboat Willie standing at the ships wheel and it was to be the same size as the "Steamboat Willie with the Washboard" piece I did for Enchanted Places which stood at one inch tall. The team explained that the edition would be a limited edition of 100 and the price would be $125.00. I asked "Why So Low?" and the team went on to explain that the previous miniature releases for the past conventions (not my work) had not been strong. My initial reaction to the notion that the category of miniatures was *not* strong really bothered me and I knew that I needed a WOW piece to change that perception.
With that, I asked if I could borrow the 1928 "Steamboat Willie" film to review and also asked that if I came up with a better concept, "Would they consider it?" They said "Yes" but cautioned me that the edition and price is already allocated and could not be changed.

So, with the category of miniatures not being strong rolling around in my head I looked at the film over and over and wondered if somehow I could add color to the piece to make it unique. At the same time I also knew that the Disney Team would *never* approve adding color to the black and white classic characters and especially "Steamboat Willie". After a few weeks of pondering this, I woke up at 4 in the morning and was struck with the thought of having every *black and white* Steamboat Willie cast member attending the film's premiere and the *color* would be in the movie theater that would surround them. Not being able to go back to sleep I jumped up and rushed to my studio to rough out the first *Steamboat Willie Premiere* mock up! Excited about the concept I couldn't wait to surprise the team with the model. Not only did they love the concept but priced the piece at $250.00 with a Limited Edition of 500 plus 25 Artist Proofs. To my great joy, the entire *Steamboat Willie Premiere* edition sold out and the immediate result was that the Storytime and Steamboat works broadened the perception as to what was possible in the category of "The Art of Miniature" by Olszewski which, before the show, the perception of what I had to offer as a miniaturist had been limited to the detailed micro works that I was known for during my time at Goebel Miniatures. Now, with the success of the show, anything was possible.



The 4 AM rough mock up of the Steamboat Willie concept that I presented to the Disney Team



Steamboat Willie Cast Member Premiere, on a Storytime style base, released 2001

As it turned out, anything was possible because at that same 2001 convention, I was pulled aside and introduced to a second Disney Manager, Deanne Hill, who asked if I would be interested in recreating Disneyland Mainstreet for the upcoming 50th Anniversary. Surprised by the idea, my first words were, "I'm interested but I'm not an architectural modeler". Her response was, "We don't care, we like how you think" and what followed was the commission to create Disneyland Mainstreet, "In Miniature".



The Disneyland Mainstreet USA Brochure 2002

Sleeping Beauty's Castle, The 1st release in the Disneyland Mainstreet collection, 2002



Myself, John Lasseter, and Bruce Richards in John's home office after setting up the complete Disneyland Mainstreet USA platform. Sept. 25th, 2011