"History of the Olszewski Heirloom and Paper Clip Box"
by Robert Olszewski

"Rapunzel" Heirloom Box c Olszewski 2008

"History of the Olszewski "Heirloom Box" and "Paper Clip Box"

This review presents the chronological evolution of a line of decorative boxes titled "Heirloom Box" and "Paper Clip Box" which I created over an eleven year period from 2000 to 2011. In that time, 39 designs were explored, 27 which are Disney in theme, of which only 21 were released, and 12 Olszewski designs of which only 6 were released.

My interest in boxes of all sorts and sizes came from the works that I viewed on the Museum visits that I would arrange in my off time while doing the personal appearances that I was making at trade shows and collectible shops. This influence not only showed up in the "Heirloom Box" line but also in the "Disney Jewel Box" line, the "Pokitpal" line and the "Nature's Treasures" line which is also known as the "Nature's Canvas". To differentiate between the two, the "Nature's Canvas" designs do not have magnets and the "Nature's Treasures" designs do have magnets.

In our own home, I use the "Heirloom Boxes" to keep business cards in and in the "Disney Jewel Boxes" my wife Eva likes to keep special pieces of jewelry in like the "Unicorn Pendant" that I designed for the Franklin Mint. The Nature's Treasures are great for holding an extra set of keys and for pills to be kept handy and safe while traveling, my favorite "Pokitpal" to carry is "Sad and happy Jack" which when I leave the house, Eva always asks, "Do you have Jack?" to which I always answer, "Yes, I have Jack!".

"Ever After", c Disney 1999
"Disney Jewel Box"

"Racoon" c Olszewski
2008 "Nature's Canvas"

"Sad and Happy Jack"
c Disney 2008
"Pokitpal"

"THE OAK GROVE", a year 2000 release

As a1968 Graduate and Alumni of IUP, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, I was honored to receive the 1998 "Distinguished Alumni Award". At Breakfast the next morning, the President of IUP, Lawrence Pettit, stopped by my table and asked if I would be interested in creating a work to celebrate the upcoming 125th Anniversary. For certain I was interested and like all proposals I needed a little time to think over what approach I would take and settled on the idea of a decorative and practical "Desk Box" in a wood finish that could hold any number of items such as business cards.

"THE FIRST HEIRLOOM BOX"

By 1998, I was traveling extensively for shows and on those trips I made it a priority to visit Museums that were nearby and it was on the visits to 3 Museums in particular, The Getty Museum in Los Angeles, The Metropolitan Museum in New York and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London that gave me a stunning introduction to what could be achieved in "The Decorative Arts". Prior to the "Oak Grove" Box, a decorative influence could already be seen in my Micro Porcelain style figurative works but creating an "Heirloom Box" opened up even more possibilities which can be seen in the repeat motifs of the "Acorns and Oak Leaves" that decorate the Lid. In all, completing the "Oak Grove" Desk Box was a rewarding experience and one that I would not forget.

"Sidewalks in the Oak Grove"

In creating any new work I always make it a point to consider who the end user might be. With this in mind, and in the case of the much loved "Oak Grove" I added the sidewalks that cut between the trees that we, as students, walked each day to get to the next class. To recall that time, lift the lid and look inside.

"The Oak Grove" c IUP 2000

Gallery of Light "The Pirates Jail Scene" c Disney 2007

"THE ORIGIN OF THREE NEW CONCEPTS"

In 2007 while in a meeting with the Disneyland products manager to discuss new designs for the Disneyland Mainstreet Program, Deane Hill asked if I could submit some ideas for the upcoming 40th anniversary of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" Attraction. For sure, I was excited about the opportunity and on the drive home I decided that I would propose three different concepts and most important, each concept would have a different price point which were roughly retail prices of $20.00 and under, $55.00 to $65.00 and $85.00 to $95.00. At the time I had already created the first Olszewski Pokitpals and had a good idea of what the Pokitpals line could become. For the Heirloom Box concept, in 2000, I had already created the IUP "Oak Grove" Box and felt that a line of functional boxes with wood finishes would do well as well. As for the Gallery of Light concept, I had already presented the idea to a company back east and they liked the idea of "lighted interior scenes" but not in a black box. So, still believing in the "Black Box" approach, I felt that the Pirates Anniversary was a perfect opportunity to revisit the concept of a scene in a shadow box and worked up the first Gallery of Light concept to present at the next meeting. Deane accepted all three concepts and the first designs of three new product lines were introduced at the Pirates of the Caribbean event.

After the successful introduction of the "Pirates Treasure Chest" I followed up with 4 new designs, 4 of which were released and one, "Mickey on the Matterhorn" which was not released.

"The Pirates Treasure Chest"
"The Snow White Portrait Box"
The Nightmare Before Christmas. "Holiday Doors"
"The Tiki Drums"
"Mickey On The Matterhorn"

Heirloom Box
"The Pirates Treasure Chest" c Disney 2008

Pokitpal
"Pirates Shield" c Disney 2008

"Snow White Portrait Box" c Disney 2008

"Holiday Doors" c Disney 2008

"Tiki Drums" c Disney 2008

" Mickey On The Matterhorn" Prototype, Not Released c Disney 2008

"Mickey On The Matterhorn" Side Views

"Mickey On The Matterhorn" Back View

"2008 - 2010 Enesco, Olszewski and Disney Heirloom Boxes"

In 2007, I was happy to sign a contract with the gift ware company Enesco LLC. As agreed, I would continue to design new Disneyland and Disney World Mainsteet buildings, Gallery of Lights and Pokitpals for the Disney Theme parks and at the same time I looked forward to creating new "Heirloom Boxes", and "Gallery of Lights" for Enesco, all of which would be sold at Gift shops across the U.S. and at the Disney Theme Parks as well. Besides that, I also looked forward to introducing a new line that I was excited about titled "Nature's Canvas".

So, with the contract signed and over the next three years, I created 25 New Heirloom Box designs, 14 of which were Disney Themed and of the 14 Disney Themed designs, 9 went to market and 6 did not. Also, of the 25 new Heirloom Box designs, 11 were original Olszewski designs, 5 of which went to market and 6 did not. It is important to know that for this section of my Heirloom Box works, I have included a complete list of all my designs which, although 11 of the 25 did not go to market I felt all 25 should be included in this summary which I think that the reader will enjoy as they represent a variety of stages of development. Last, I am certain that many will be curious as to why so many designs did not go to market, and simply put, for personal reasons, I decided not to sign a new contract extension with Enesco.

"Dealer Plaque" c Olszewski 2008

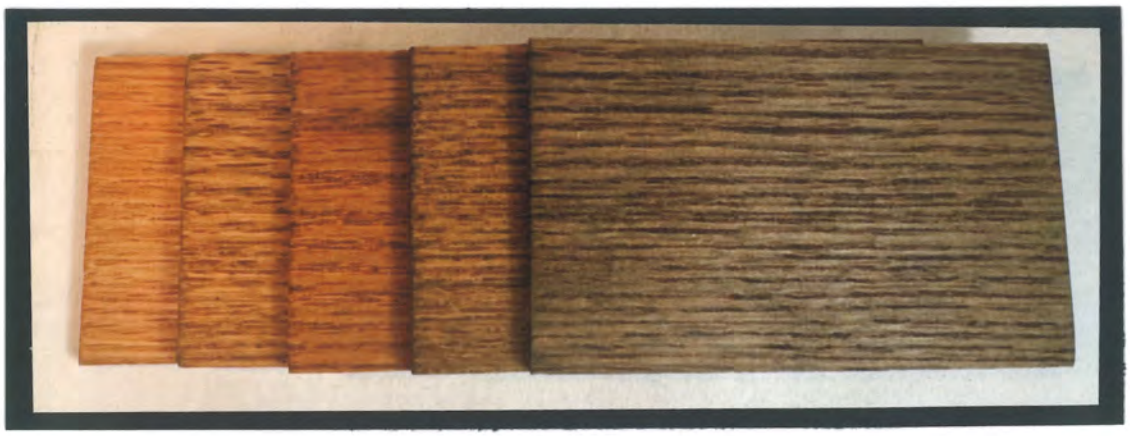
"Artistic Comments On The 2008 Enesco Releases"

At this point in 2007, I had only completed 5 Heirloom Box designs that had been released into the market.This included the "Oak Grove" Box for IUP but did not include what would have been the sixth release, "The Matterhorn" which I held back so I could revisit the coloration.

For the Heirloom Box concept, my first challenge was to gain control of the coloration and to do this I went to a local hardware store to look for wood finishes that I could count on. It was a great visit as I found that there was a wide variety of wood finishes available and proceeded to create a selection of wood samples that I could use for reference which I started using for the 2008 releases. On the creative side, and at this point in 2007, I was still coming to understand, beyond being functional, just what the concept of Heirloom Boxes had to offer. For me, the first asset "is" "Function", the second is that with the natural wood finishes and limited color, an Heirloom Box can fit on a desk, on a piece of furniture and even on a kitchen counter like the future "Ugly Duckling" which we use in our home to keep tea bags.

Another asset of the Heirloom box concept is that I can present "complex shapes" that are enhanced by the limited wood tones and are further enriched when combined with natural wood grains. This approach has resulted in some of my favorite Heirloom Boxes which can be seen in the 2008 releases like the "Cinderella Coach" and "Geppetto's Work Bench".

Further, with so many surfaces available to decorate, the Heirloom Box concept shines when it comes to being able to tell a story. This can be seen in the 2008 four sided "Rapunzel" and two sided "Nativity" which features the Holy Family "Traveling to Bethlehem" on one side and "Arriving in Bethlehem" on the other.



"The Eight, 2008 Heirloom Box designs that went to market"

"The Heirloom Box Dealer Plaque"
"The Cinderella Coach"
"Rapunzel"
"Geppetto's Work Bench"
"Peter Pan, Big Ben"
The "Mad Tea Party"
"Noah's Ark" and "The Nativity"

"Cinderella's Coach" c Disney 2008

"Rapunzel" c Olszewski 2008
Removable Roof Reveals A Secret Space To Hide A Ring

"Rapunzel", A Love Story

"Riding through the forest, the Prince hears music and follows the sound"

"Like a golden rope, the captive maiden lowers her hair for the Prince to climb"

"The Two Bond for Life"

"To start anew and leave the past behind"

"Geppetto's Work Bench" c Disney 2008

Next Page: "Tinkerbell Atop Big Ben"
c Disney 2008

"Mad Tea Party" c Disney 2008
Note: Remove Alice to reveal a
Secret Hiding Place.

Luminiart, "Noah's Ark" c Olszewski 2005
Artist Proof, was not released.

Heirloom Box, "Noah's Ark" c Olszewski 2008

"The Nativity"
Front, Arriving at Bethlehem

"The Nativity" c Olszewski 2008
Back: Traveling to Bethlehem

"The 2009 Enesco, Olszewski and Disney Heirloom Box Releases"

In this group of Heirloom Box releases I continued to explore the concept of "Storytelling" and for the first time I introduced designs that included a hinged door that opened to reveal an extra scene inside. This extra panel was particularly helpful in telling the story of "Beauty and Beast" as we are able to follow "the frightened characters from when the spell is cast" on the back panel, and on to the front panel when things are going well at the castle. Open the hinged door and you will find that the spell is broken, everyone is happy and all have been returned to their human forms.

Also of note is that I added decorative trims to all eight designs and I especially like how the decorations on the "Tortoise and Hare and the "Ugly Duckling" added not only a decoration but expanded on the story. In the "Tortoise and Hare" the Hare runs in both directions all around the Tortoise, grows tired and falls asleep only to lose the race with the Tortoise. In the "Ugly Duckling", the duckling runs awkwardly around the farmyard and later will become a beautiful swan. Last, look closely at the wood grain in the "Ugly Duckling" and how it captures the effect of water on a pond. I had mentioned "Wood Grain" as an asset earlier in the "2008 Artistic Comments" section and the "Ugly Duckling" is a great example of how this subtle feature can enhance a design.

"The Seven 2009, Olszewski and Disney Heirloom Box Released Designs"

"The Snow White Heart Box'
"The Tortoise and the Hare"
"Mickey's 80th Birthday'
"Tinker Bell in Hook's Lantern"
"Beauty and the Beast"
"Sleeping Beauty"
"The Ugly Duckling"

"The Snow White Heart Box" c Disney 2009
In this work, notice how the darker decorative elements on the base and the darker figure on the top, frame the lighter finish of the heart box.

"The Tortoise and the Hare" c Olszewski 2009
Notice how the confident hare runs circles around the Tortoise.

"Mickey's 80th Birthday" c Disney 2009
Find the year when you were born.

"Tinker bell in Hook's Lantern" c Disney 2009
"London"

"Neverland"

"Beauty and the Beast" c Disney 2009
Back: The Spell is Cast.

Front: The Beast's Castle and all inside are under the spell.

"The Spell is Broken",
And all are transformed back to their human forms.

"Sleeping Beauty" c Disney 2009
"The Fairies run to the forest to hide Aurora from Maleficent"

Back: The Prince fights the Dragon"

Front: Open the panels to see that Love prevails.

"The Ugly Duckling" c Olszewski 2009
Notice how the natural wood grain portrays the effect of water.

"2009-2010 Enesco, Olszewski and Disney Designs "Not" Released"

Although not released, the next seven designs are still some of my favorite Heirloom Box concepts. Of the seven designs, four were sampled as Artist Proofs and number less than two or three of each made. The fifth, "Hey Diddle Diddle" was sculpted in clay but the molds to cast the artist proofs were not made. The last two designs are "Rough" mock ups and were not finished enough to have a clay reproduction made but I included them as, even though they are rough, I liked both concepts and felt they warranted being included in this review. Also, by including the unfinished designs it allows the viewer to see the stages of how my work evolves from concept rough to a finished work.

Artistically, and after completing 20 designs, I think that this next group of seven designs shows how my approach to the Heirloom Box concept was evolving.

"King Louie and Mowgli'
"Mothers and Daughters"
"The Four Seasons"
"A Monarch Emerges"
"Hey Diddle Diddle"
"Serenade"
"The New Arrival"

"King Louie and Mowgli" c Disney 2009
Was not released.

Back: "King Louie and Mowgli"

"Mothers and Daughters" c Olszewski 2010
Was not released.

In this work we are able to follow the bond between a young mother and infant daughter as they age over the years. In panel (A) on the next page, the young mother who wears her hair in a bun, caresses her infant daughter, hair in a flip, who touches her mother's "Heart Locket". In image (B), In the Spring, they go for walks and pick flowers. In image (C) the daughter has grown and caresses her aging mother who still wears the locket. In image (D), In the Fall, their roles are reversed as they go for walks and pick the fallen leaves.

Artistically, what is important to point out is that in this work "Mothers and Daughters" and the next two works, "The Four Seasons" and "A Monarch Emerges", I have for the first time, presented the concept of "The Passage of Time".

(A)

(B)

(C)

(D)

"The Four Seasons" c Olszewski 2010
Was not released.

"Spring"
Birds build their nests and blossoms are on the trees.

"Summer"
Baby birds open up to be fed and Apples hang from the limbs.

As a young boy, when summer came, the rows of strawberries in our Dad's garden were a draw. However, even more tempting were the fruit trees that grew at the edge of our neighbor's garden. Out of all of our neighbor's fruit trees my favorite was the red cherry tree, not only for the cherries but also, even though I was small, I could climb it, perch on a limb and sit quiet while right in front of me I could watch the Robins fly in, pick a cherry and fly away. To read more on how my early life in the country influenced my life and art, visit "The Early Years" chapter of my Autobiography.

"Fall"
Leaves fall from the trees as birds fly south for the winter.

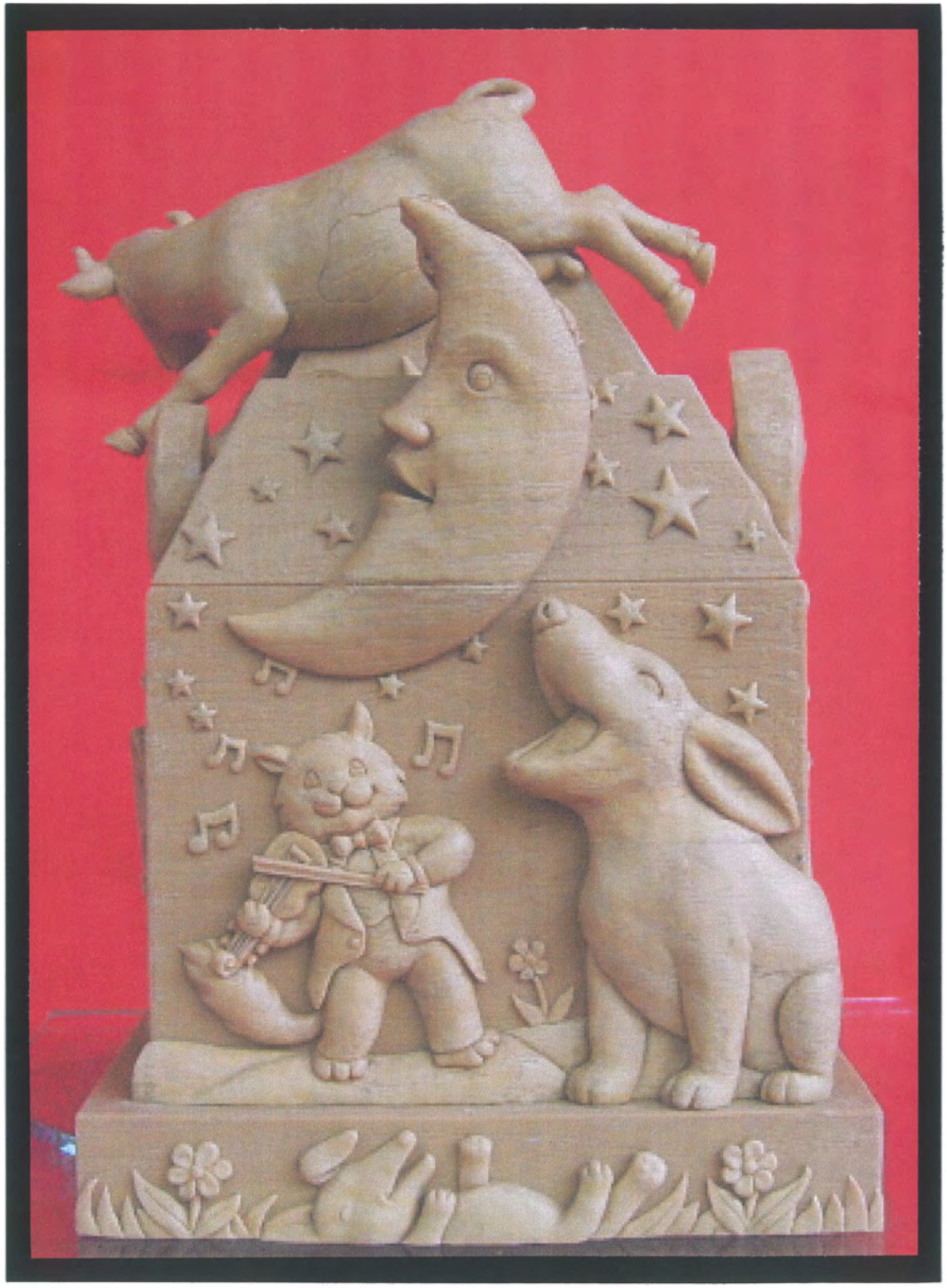
"Winter"
All the leaves have fallen, snow fills the nest, the birds are gone but will soon return.

"A Monarch Emerges" c Olszewski 2010
Was not released.

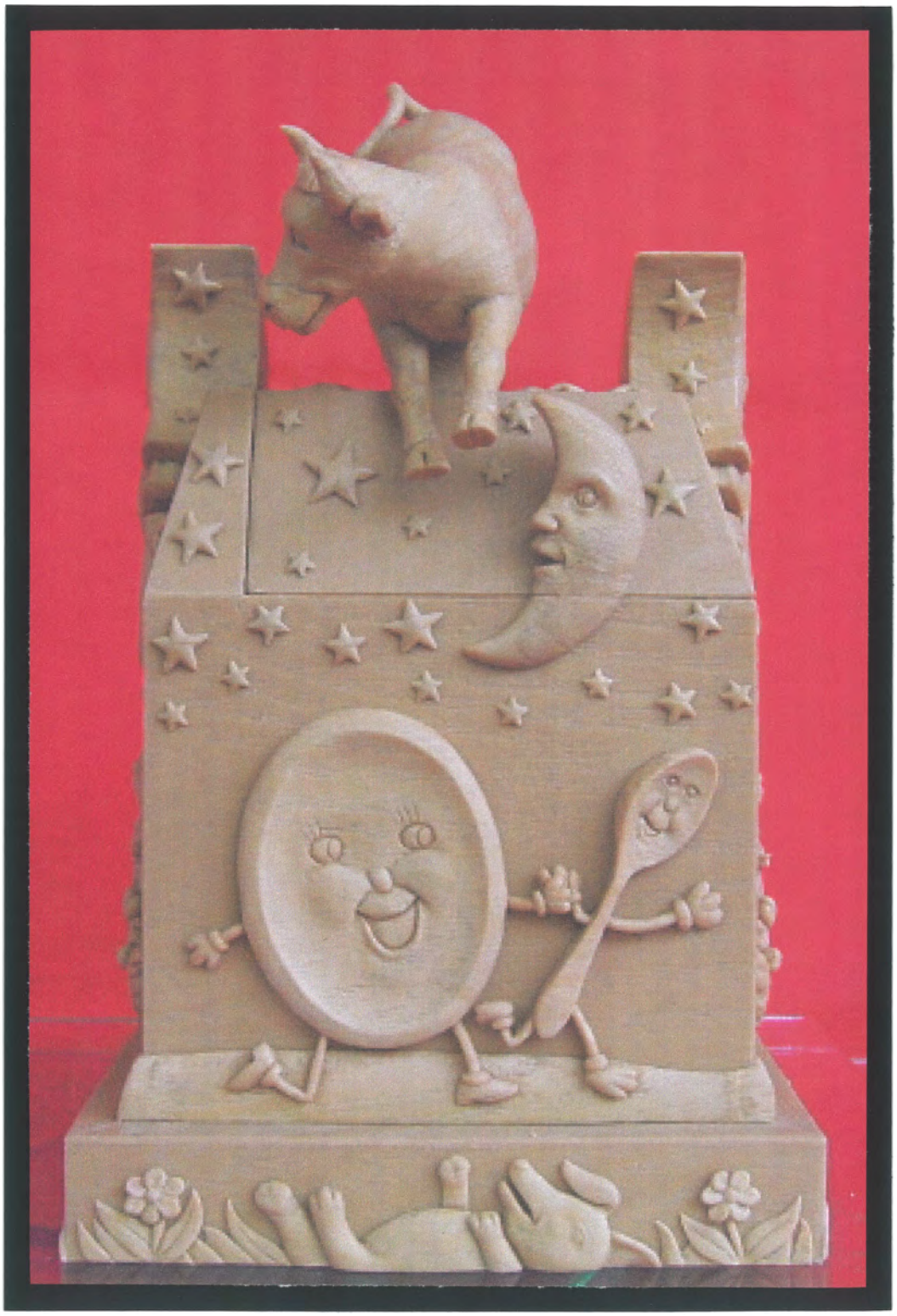
"Front"
"Open the panels to appreciate the beauty of the Monarch Butterfly"

"Hey Diddle Diddle" c Olszewski 2010
Was not released.

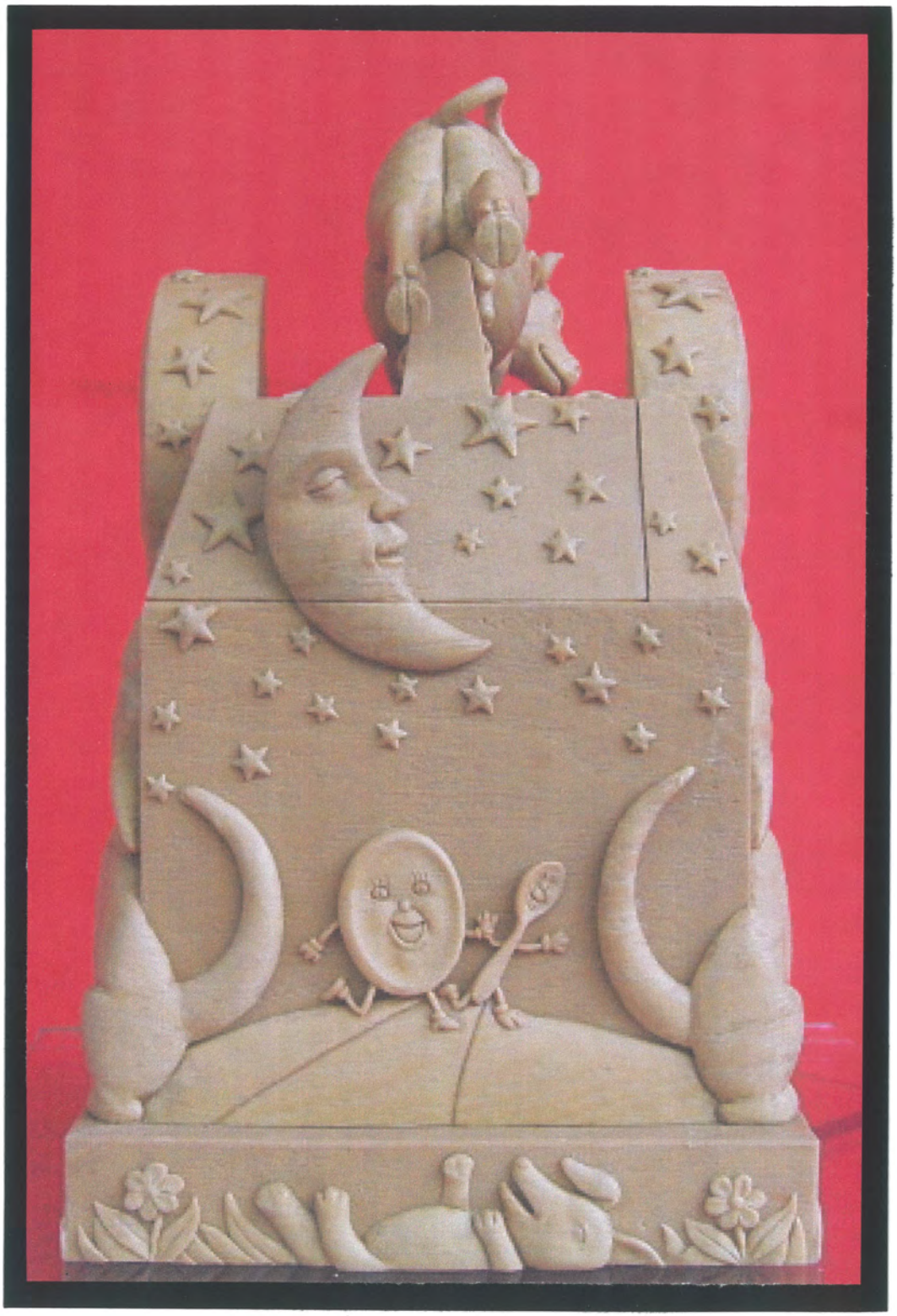
Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon,



The little dog laughed,



To see such sport,



And the dish ran away with the spoon.

"Serenade" c Olszewski 2010
Was not released.

"Serenade concept paper mock up"
Singing birds gather on top of the garden bench and disturb the napping cat.
This work was inspired by the goings on in our own backyard.

"The New Arrival" c Olszewski 2010
Was not released.

"The New Arrival Concept Clay Mock Up"
In this work, parents and grandparents gather around a crib to greet the new arrival" Even though rough, this simple "clay mock up" captured what I had in mind. To move the idea forward, I would place tracing paper over the photograph and would draw in the details. Once the drawing is worked out, I would then make adjustments to the clay mock up and proceed to finish.

"2010 Enesco Disney Character Boxes "Not" Released"

In 2010, I began working on the concept of "Disney Character Boxes'. Each box would focus on one main Character in a pose from an important film role. Also included were the Character's "Co Stars" from that same film or his "Best Friends" some of which are rarely seen depicted in Disney products like "Fifi", "Goofy Jr." and "Wilbur". It was a fun approach and I could see the possibilities of adding a collection of "Princesses" and "Villains" but, since I decided to end the contract with Enesco, these four and the previous seven designs did not go to market and only two or three "Artist Proofs" of each were made.

On an artistic note, and just for fun, I painted a full color version of the "Mickey Character Box" just to see how it would turn out. Satisfied with the experiment, I decided that taking a full color approach was not the direction I wanted to go in but did find a way to introduce a limited color approach in the "Paper Clip Boxes" that I did later for the Disney Theme Parks.

"Mickey Mouse"
"Goofy"
"Donald Duck"
"Pluto"
"Mickey Mouse" Full Color

"Mickey Mouse"
Character Box
c Disney 2010
Was not released

"Sorcerer Mickey"
Side One

"Steamboat Willie"
Side Two

"Brave Little Tailor", Side Three

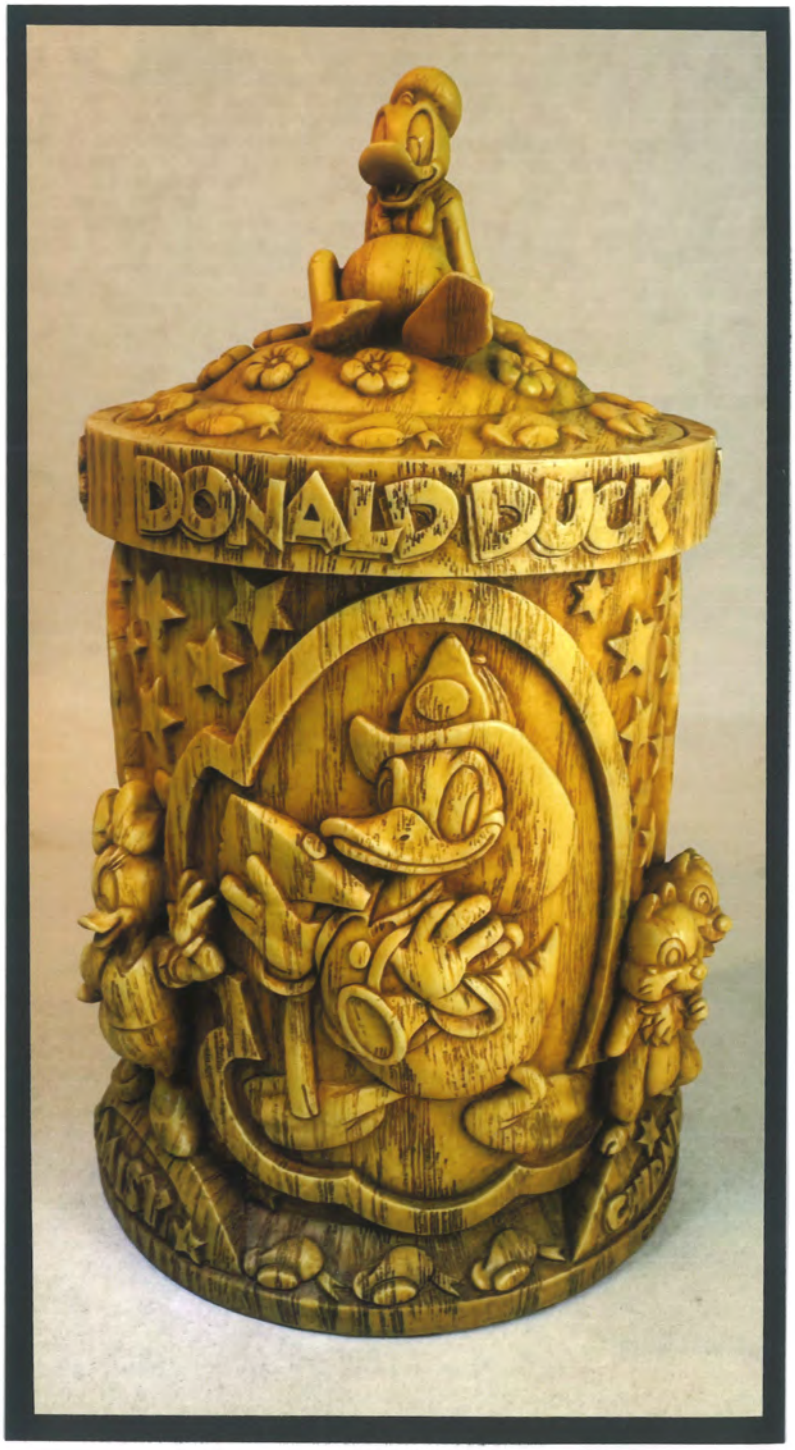
"Goofy Baseball"
Side One

"Goofy" Character Box c Disney 2010
Was not released

"Goofy Skiing", Side Two

"Goofy Pilot", Side Three

"Fireman Donald" Side One

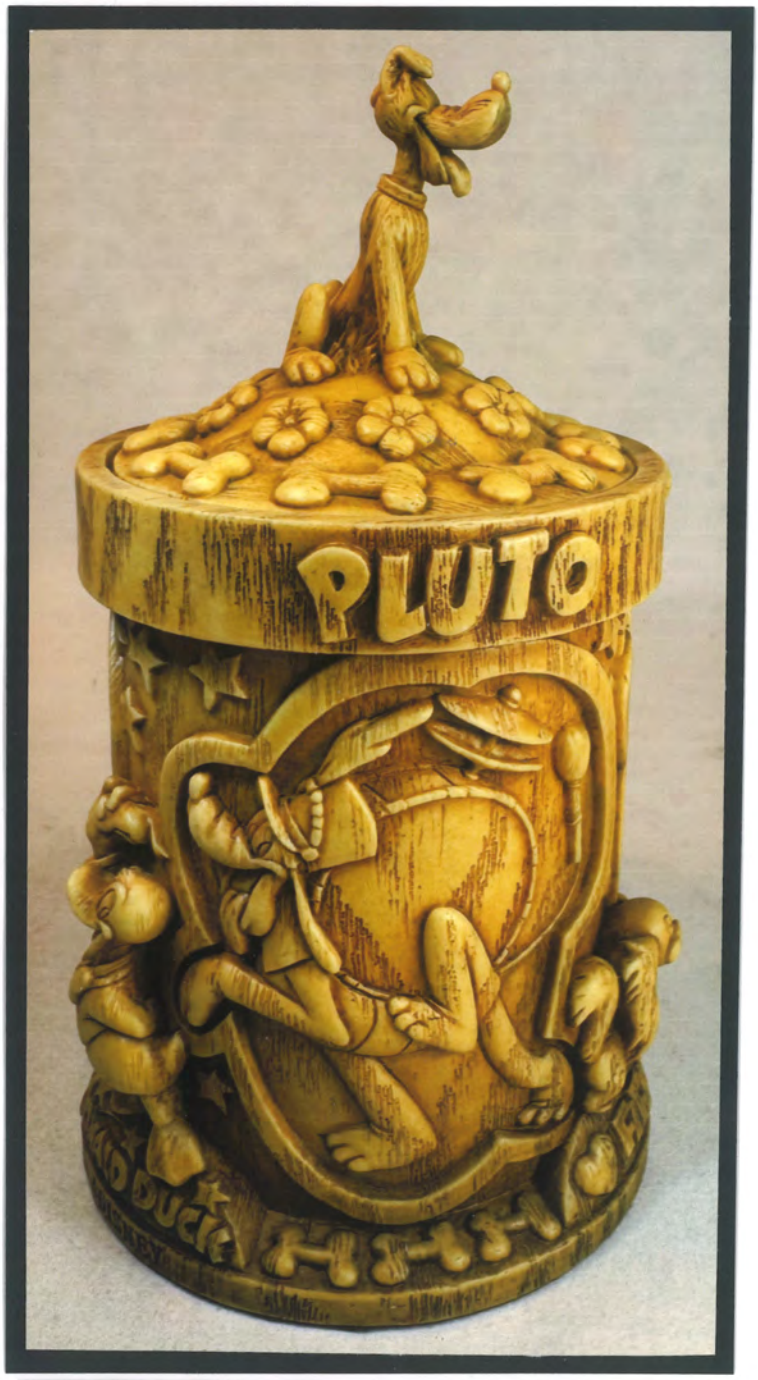


"Donald Duck" Character Box c Disney 2010
Was not released

"Caballero Donald" Side Two

"Donald Train Engineer", Side Three

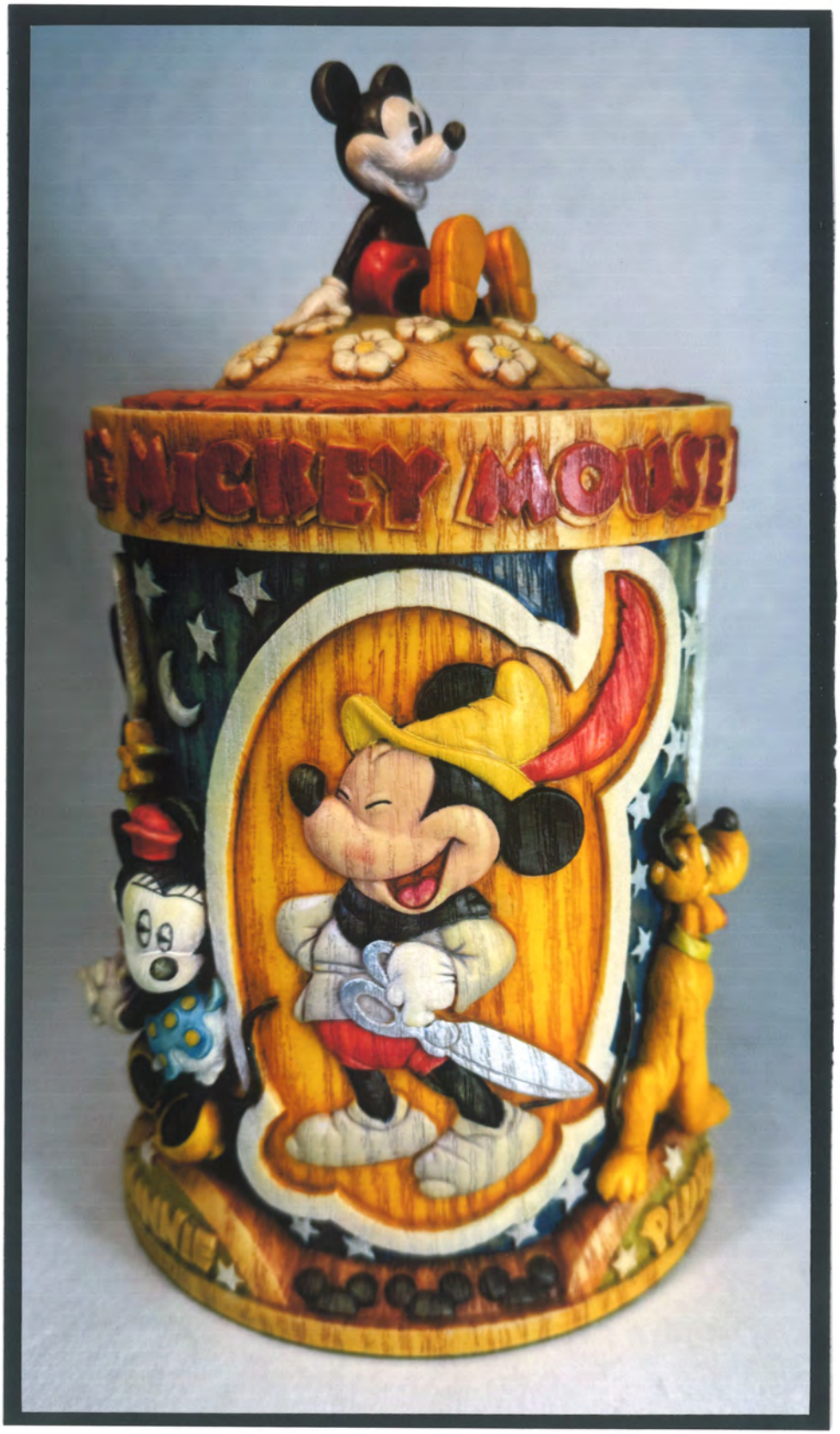
"Pluto" Character Box c Disney 2010
Was not released Side One



"Pluto" Character Box Side Two and Three

"Mickey Mouse" Character Box c Disney 2010
Full Color Prototype, Side One
Was not released

"Mickey Mouse" Character Box c Disney 2010
Full Color Prototype, Side Two, Steamboat Willie



"Mickey Mouse" Character Box c Disney 2010
Full Color Prototype, Side Three, Brave Little Tailor

"The 2011 Disney Themed "Paper Clip Boxes" that were Released at the Disneyland and Disney World Theme Parks"

As I said in the very first pages of this review, I very much liked the functionality of the "Heirloom Box" concept. So, with so much 2-D imagery generated for each new 3-D work that I make, I use Paper Clips to keep it all organized. With that in mind I decided to create a line of "Small Desk Friendly' Boxes to hold Paper Clips and for easy access, I inserted a small magnet in the top of each design to help fish the paper clips out.

What you will see in this last group of eight Heirloom Box designs is an approach that is very different from how I approached the previous thirty one designs. Rather than a literal representation of an original subject as say, "Mickey Mouse", I instead took the "Essence"of what Mickey's features are and created a shorthand of his presence and know that anyone looking at this work, even with the barest of details will still know that it is "Mickey Mouse" which is what makes the piece so whimsical. Catching the "Essence" of a character can also be seen in the "Maleficent" piece which I distilled down to the "Horned Cap", the "Top of her Staff" and the "Raven". What I also like to point out are the details that I did include in these works like the "Cat" from the "Haunted Mansion Graveyard", who is in this rendition is "Alive" and sitting in the Window on the left side.

Also, I think that the smaller size of this collection contributed to not only a "Shorthand of the Imagery" but also made it possible for the first time to introduce a "Limited Color' scheme to each design.

In the end, after 11 years of having the "Heirloom Box" concept in my mind, 39 Heirloom Box concepts were explored and of those only 27 went to market. Even so, it was 11 years well spent as it instilled in me an even greater appreciation of the "Works of Art in Wood" that I found and still find on my visits to Museums.

"Mickey Mouse"
"The Haunted Mansion"
"The Tiki Room"
"Maleficent"
"The Sleeping Beauty Castle"
"The Cinderella Castle"
"Darth Vader"
"R2 D2"

"Mickey Mouse" Paper Clip Box
c Disney 2011

"A hidden magnet helps
to fish out a paper clip"

"Haunted Mansion", Front
Paper Clip Box c Disney
2011

Hitchhiking Ghosts, Side view

Cemetery Cat alive in window
Side View

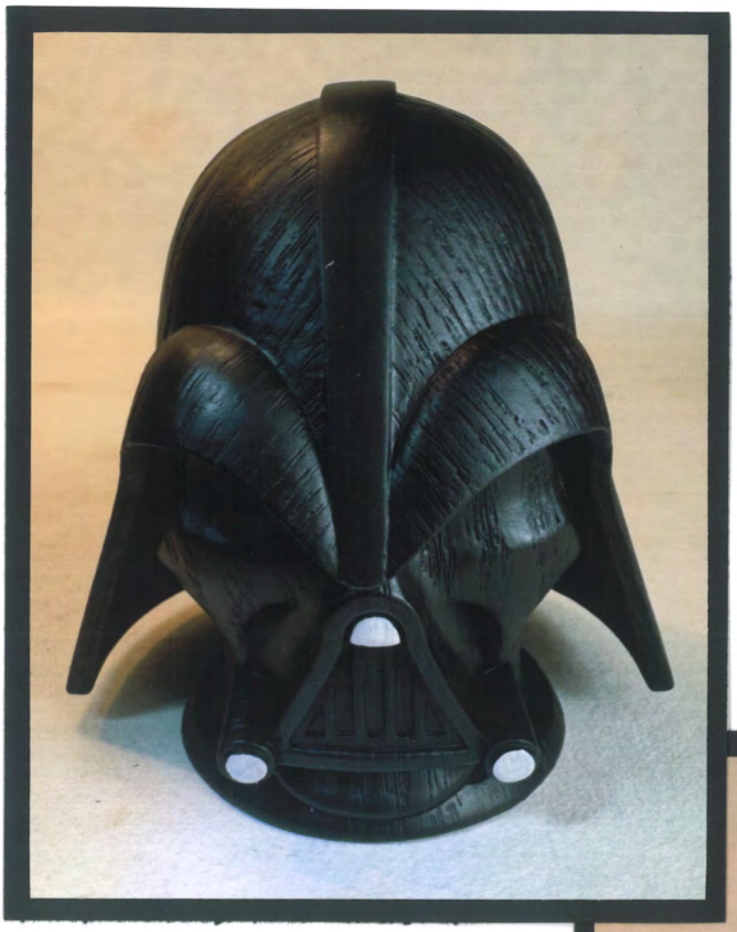
Stretching Portraits
Back View

"Enchanted Tiki Room" c Disney 2011

"Maleficent" c Disney 2011

"Sleeping Beauty Castle" c Disney 2011

"Cinderella Castle" c Disney 2011



"Darth Vader" c Disney 2011

"R2D2" c Disney 2011