

A Gift of Joy

ORNAMENTS CELEBRATE THE SEASON
AND CREATE THE MEMORIES

by Barbara Wujcik



This Cardinals and Birch Ornament is inspired by original artwork of James Hautman of the Hautman Brothers, nationally known wildlife artists. Handpainted on the inside of the glass ball, it is done with meticulous detail. Suggested retail: \$13. From **Gallerie II**; 888/889-9868 or gallerieii.com.

Christmas ornaments—they are the bits and pieces that make the season. They hold the memories of past holidays and memories of the people that populated them. They can celebrate the joyous events of the present, a wedding, a new birth, a great vacation. These, in turn, will become memories as they are unwrapped next year. Ornaments are a perfect gift. They convey all the giver wants to share in one special package.

MAKING MERRY

Do people decorate their homes, and more importantly, will they for the upcoming Christmas season? The "Christmas and Seasonal Decorations Report 2009" recently completed by Unity Marketing (www.unitymarketingonline.com) has some interesting observations on the subject.

"In the latest survey we did of 1,000 consumers who recently bought decorations—Christmas is still the number one season for decorations," says Pam Danziger, president and owner of Unity Marketing.

"More and more people are decorating. The participation of households is up. People have a need for decorations. But many more are decorating for other holidays as well—Halloween, Easter, Valentine's Day, and the Fourth of July.

"Retailers should stock other decorations, besides those for Christmas. This is a huge opportunity for retailers. It's a compelling reason to show a variety of decorations."

LOOKS TO CELEBRATE

People tend to collect decorations from year to year and reuse them with each season, Pam found. This, of course, includes ornaments. Pam says it's up to retailers to give these people who want to decorate a reason to buy new pieces.

"This is where innovations and creative thinking come in. Interestingly, new colors is not the answer. Most people still prefer traditional red and green. Consumers still want the traditional themes but with a twist."

One place that is a great source for decorating ideas and ornament trends is Christmasworld, the annual show held in Frankfurt, Germany. It is reported that there was good atmosphere at this year's show. The decoration industry is optimistic about the future.

The positive mood at Christmasworld was due in part to the good order situation and in part to the certainty that, in difficult economic times, people are increasingly tempted to spoil themselves with little luxuries at home.

"Even though consumers are having to tighten their belts a little, they want to treat themselves and their families at Christmas. It is something we have also experienced in the past," explains Klaus Müller-Blech, Managing Director of Inge's Christmas Decor GmbH.

Retro, the modern way, is one trend that was on display. When it comes to decorations, the old times are back in a modern guise. Christmas baubles with fairy tale figures and sayings bring back childhood memories. Christmas decoration gets a whole new inner life: delicate Christmas figures can be found inside glass baubles, music boxes and retro radios.

SHINY & BRIGHT

What has been popular and continues to be popular in the ornament world? Robyn Smalletz, president of Gloria Duchin Inc. (401/438-5400), offers her thoughts.

"It's been an interesting year. We sell across the board to a host of retailers and we've seen a continued growth in photo ornaments. Marriages, Baby's 1st Christmas, a new pet—celebratory milestones—all have been consistent sellers the last few years. Silk-screened, captioned ornaments performed well. Many of these include Swarovski crystal that add value. We have a great partner in them. The Family Collection represents consistent value-added and continues to grow.

"Patriotic products—supporting the military—is another group that is becoming a mainstay. It started after 9/11 and has continued. The pieces are accented with Swarovski crystals. It adds collectibility. All the sentimental collections are doing well.

"The company is 30 years old this year and over the years, we have about 100 million copyrighted ornaments in circulation. We have data on what motivates consumers.

"Spirituality and inspirational are doing well. Each year we update our line by 30 percent. We receive letters from people who have been buying our line for years. Affordability is key—everything is under \$20. But you still receive great value. People can afford to give them as gifts, to let themselves celebrate."

GOING TO MARKET

Consumers are looking for new means of expression. They want holiday themes that are traditional but with a twist. Seek out the companies that offer innovations and creative designs when you go to market and reward them by ordering their wares. The results can be many, merry sales. **TR**