

MARKET PULSE

Top Billing For Framers: Movie Posters

by Bradford C. Boyle

The collection (and thus displaying) of movie memorabilia, for a long time, from the '40s-late '70s, a neglected area of American art, has seen a steady growth in popularity. And, there has been a dramatic increase in prices. Because of this, new business exists for those in the picture

framing industry: you have an opportunity to exhibit creativity and skill in framing the posters your customers already own and you can also speculate yourself in a market that has consistently seen appreciation.

A properly framed poster can increase its value; improper framing can dramatically re-

duce value. The purpose of this brief article is threefold—first, to familiarize the reader as to the various types of memorabilia. Second, to look into the workings of the marketplace: how to effectively buy (and sell) for the best price. Last, to give some tips on the framing and storage of these posters. A number of fine

new books exist on this subject that have been written by experts and this is, as said, a cursory look to get one started.

Brief Background

The earliest posters were a stock design. Instead of being printed for individual films, they were of a general design, containing a space for the promoter to insert the name of the movie being shown. In the beginning, posters came in a plethora of sizes but soon industry standards were adopted. With the advent of the "star system" in Hollywood, posters began to be produced for individual films, usually depicting the leading performer(s).

The "one-sheet" became the most common type and are still used today outside the theater. Having said that, there are many others a framer should learn to recognize.

Types of Movie Memorabilia

One-sheets: Typically measuring 27 by 41 inches, they are printed on paper and are folded. Originally, one-sheets measured 28 by 42 but this size disappeared with silent movies.

Three-sheets: Three times as large as one-sheets, they are substantially rarer and measure 41 by 81 inches. Like one-sheets, they are printed on paper and come folded.

Six-sheets: They are about six times as big as a one-sheet, measuring 81 inches square. While rarer than one or three sheets, it is unlikely a framer will see many of them because of their size. They are popular with collectors.

Half-sheets (or display posters): The last of the "sheets" family, half-sheets measure 22 by 28 inches. Instead of paper, they are printed on lightweight cardboard stock.

Inserts: Also printed on lightweight cardboard, inserts measure 14 by 36 inches. Printed vertically, they are usually rolled but sometimes folded. Folds may reduce their value.

Window cards: 14 by 22 inches, they are printed on lightweight cardboard. The cards were given to store owners in the vicinity of the theater to display in their storefronts, thus the origin of the term. Because of this, they often have handwriting on the bottom portion, telling where and when the film was being shown.

Lobby cards: These small, card stock posters measure 11 by 14 inches. Typically produced in sets of eight, seven cards depict

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SPAULDING



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scenes from the film, with the other listing the film's title and some credits. These are called, respectively, "scene cards" and "title cards."

Stills: Not posters, stills are 8 by 10 inch photographs from the film. They may be black-and-white or color. Stills are usually photographed separately from

the filming of the movie and thus may contain scenes edited out of the final print.

Buying, Selling

The quickest and easiest route to buy and sell movie memorabilia, obviously, is through a dealer who specializes in the market and is an expert. The movie poster marketplace is becoming increasingly integrated and the number of dealers illustrates that fact. (See accompanying sidebar.) If there is a particular poster you (or your customer)

need, this is the quickest route to procurement.

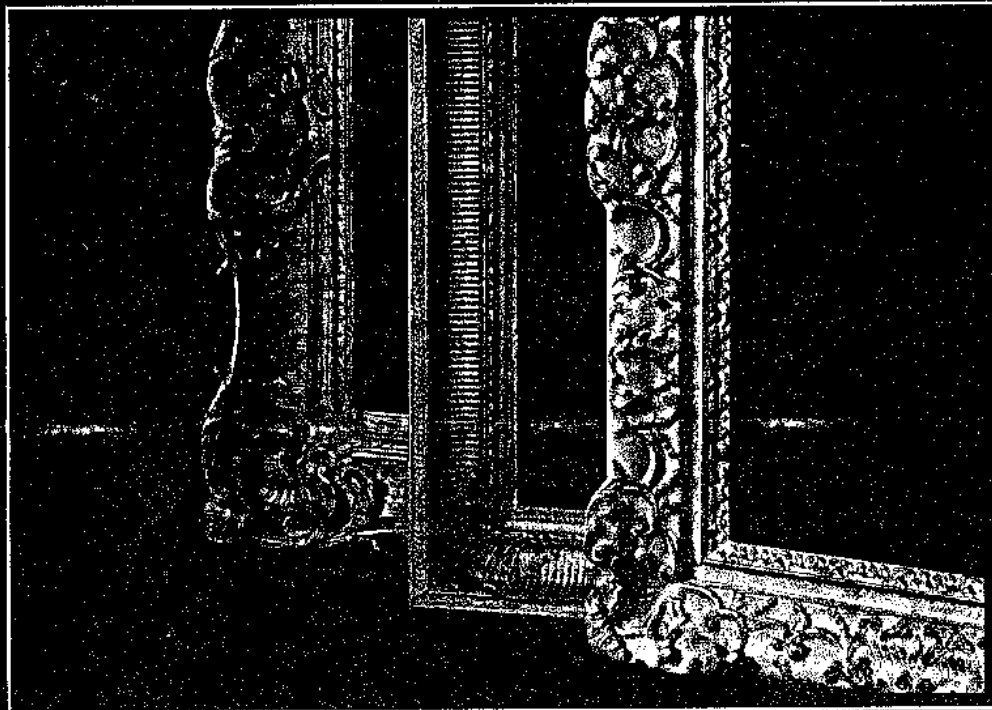
I would recommend buying a copy of one of the price guides available for movie memorabilia; for an idea of the range of a poster's value. Some posters can be worth much more than their chronological counterparts for a variety of reasons. Factors affecting price are the leading performers, the director, the artist who drew the poster, even what special effects expert worked on the film. A price guide provides a rough guideline of value.

An alternative route is to buy and sell among collectors, avoiding the middleman. Collectors are well organized and easily accessible. Secure a copy of *Movie Collector's World* or a similar publication that deals with the marketplace. The latter contains ads from collectors (and dealers) listing their needs and wants.

The second way is more fun. Most major cities have Star Trek or science fiction film conventions with dealers' rooms filled with tables upon tables of eph-

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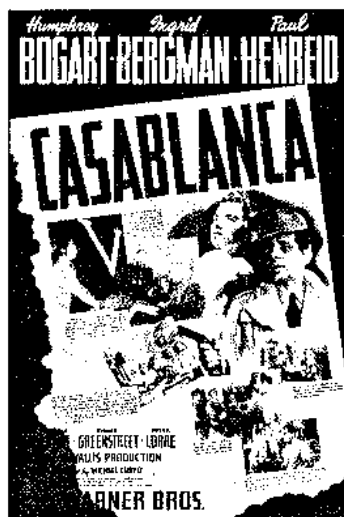
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The most-requested movie graphic is the (1942) one-sheet from *Casablanca*. It has a value in excess of \$4,500. Courtesy, Motion Picture Arts Gallery.

mera from collectors and dealers alike. Wandering through them gives you the added advantage of viewing the material first-hand and being able to haggle. When you get enough merchandise to sell, you may even consider renting a table yourself.

Storing, Displaying

Movie memorabilia needs and deserves special care. Like all posters, they should be kept away from direct sunlight, extreme temperature changes and humidity. While you will want to frame and display your best finds, the surplus posters will need to be stored. When storing, be sure to use Mylar, not plastic. Mylar, unlike plastic, contains no harmful chemicals that can damage the material.

When framing these posters, the key is acid-free. Do not mount the poster. It is tempting to do so since most posters are folded and mounting makes them lie flat. But mounting tends to reduce value since you are permanently altering it. If you insist on mounting, use acid-free adhesive.

After framing a number of these posters, be sure to display them prominently in order to at-

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tract the business of other collectors. If there is a science fiction convention to be held nearby, ask the organizers if you can help—in framing the announcement poster or in framing some of the posters of exhibitors as a means of demonstrating your expertise.

Wrap-Up

Those in the picture framing business should take the time to understand the various types of movie memorabilia and to be cognizant of the market appreciation. For instance, the one-sheet for *The Wizard of Oz* could be bought in 1965 for \$15 or so. The current price runs several thousand dollars, if one can be found. While it is unlikely you will see such impressive gains on pieces you eventually acquire yourself, the demand for movie material is rapidly

growing overall. And, posters are limited in number; while demand grows, supply of the best shrinks.

Fewer dealers these days have a clear road where they can buy cheap and sell high because everyone is competing and searching out certain most popular renditions. But bargains can be found.

A familiarity with the market will not only allow you to price properly if you ever do get into trading the posters but a proper reading of the value of a specific

poster will help structure framing design decisions. A poster that is valuable on the market deserves a housing of the highest quality. Talk the film buff's language and you get this business, probably forever.

Movie Memorabilia Sources

A partial list of sources may help the novice wend his way around the wonderful world of movie art and memorabilia:

For posters, two recommended dealers are Ira Resnick, Motion Picture Arts Gallery, 133 East 58th Street, New York City, (212) 223-1009, and Jose Carpio's Cine Mond, 1932 Polk Street, San Francisco. According to New York's Poster America's Jack Banning, these two have "good material and they buy stuff back." Also, Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store, 242 West 14th Street, New York, (212) 674-8474, has posters and stills from the last 20 years, predominately from horror and sci fi films.

And, for a variety of ephemera associated with the specialty: *Movie Collector's World*, P.O. Box 309, Fraser, Michigan 48026, is a hobbyist publication providing a buy-sell forum. Belvedere Island, California's, Cone Hollywood (415) 435-1929, Muskegon, Michigan's, Cinema City (616-722-7760) and The Paper Chase, Tucker, Georgia, (800-433-0025) are other contacts.

Archivart Purchased

MOONACHIE, N.J.—Martin J. Usdan, president of Heller & Usdan, announced the acquisition of Archivart (which changed its name from Process Materials a year and a half ago). Archivart is a supplier of archival products for conservation and restoration. With an expanded product capability, the division will add new products for exhibition, storage and conservation of historic and artistic materials.

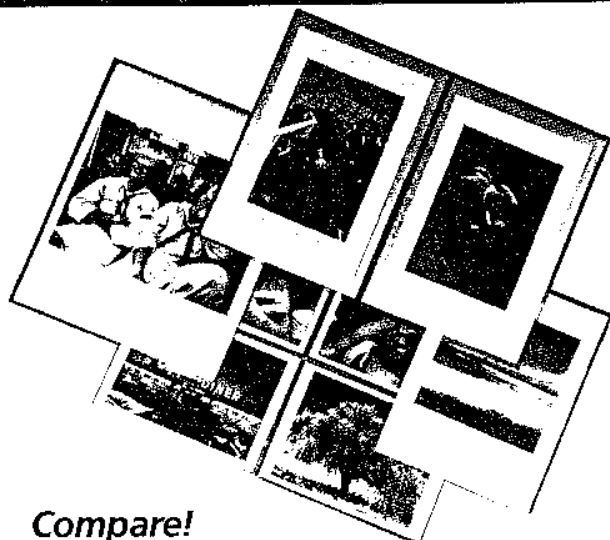
Established in 1895, Heller and Usdan is a paper converter and distributor and this is its first foray into framing.

Marketing director Robert Stiff and sales manager Abby Shaw will continue with Archivart and they can be reached at the new address: 7 Ceasar Place, Moonachie, New Jersey 07074; (201) 804-8986; (fax) (201) 935-5964.

Archivart had been owned by Lindenmeyr Paper and was in Rutherford, New Jersey.

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