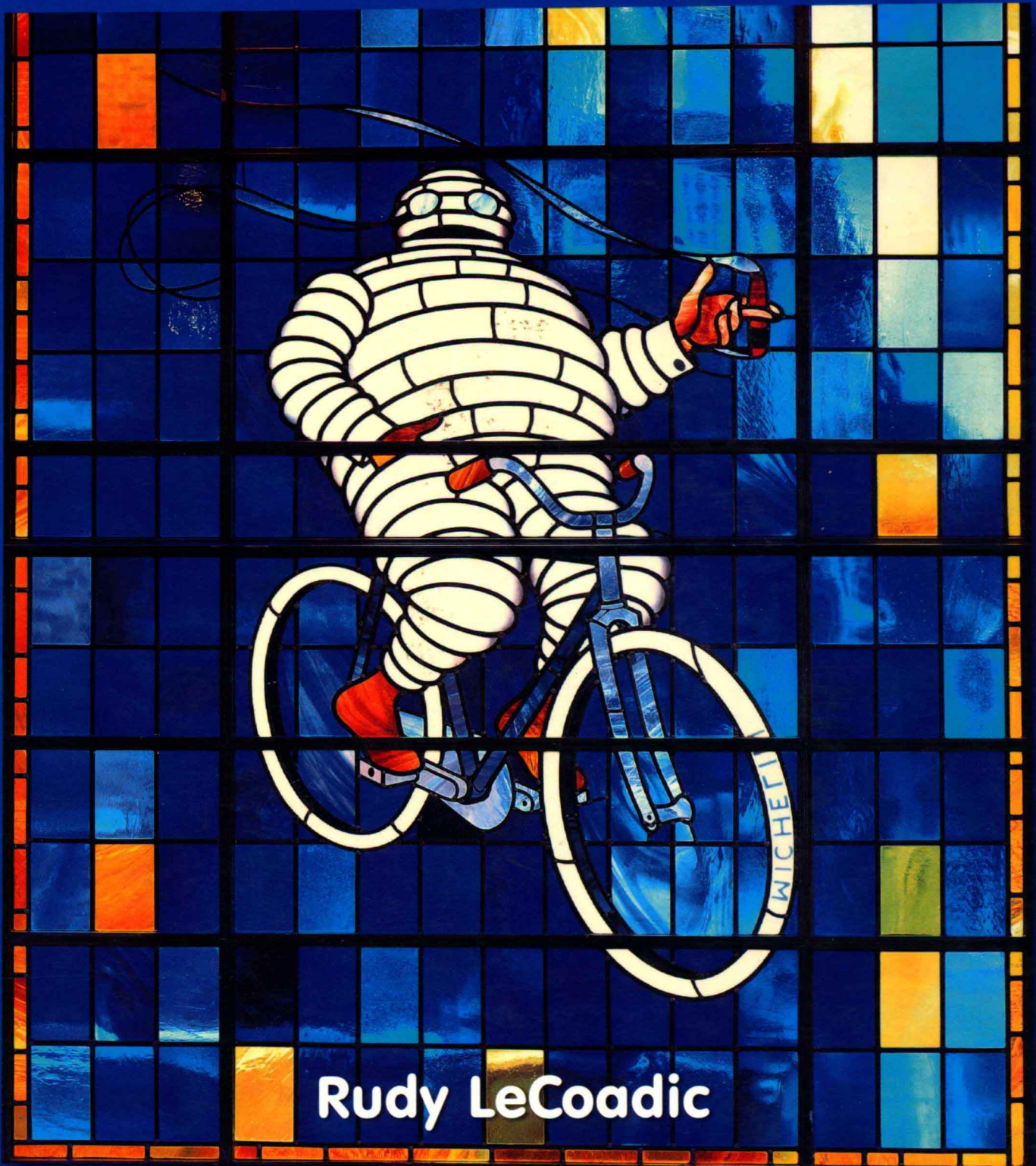


The Michelin[®] Man



An Unauthorized Advertising Showcase



Rudy LeCoadic



A Schiffer Book for Collectors

With Price Guide

The Michelin Man

An Unauthorized Advertising Showcase



Rudy LeCoadic



4880 Lower Valley Road, Atglen, PA 19310 USA

Dedication

To my wife Melanie, whose enthusiasm for life is legendary, and our sons, Félix, five years old, who thinks people that don't collect anything are weird, and Lucas, two-and-a-half years old, who believes that Bibendum is a member of the family.



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The Contributors

I am very fortunate that some of you allowed me to photograph the rarest pieces from your collections, while others took it upon themselves to provide me with great images. I am also honored that such a great international group of passionate collectors have allowed me to share their knowledge and collections with others through this book. I thank you my friends.

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Introduction

Most people are surprised when they learn that the Michelin company was founded in France in 1832. Bibendum came in a bit later, in 1898, when Édouard and André Michelin found their inspiration in a stack of tires ranging in sizes, neatly displayed during an exposition. The form of a man was evident, only lacking arms and legs.

They hired the services of an artist named Marius Rossillon (1867-1947), who at that time was creating advertising images under the pseudonym O'Galop. He adapted one of his creations believed to have been originally for a brewery, hence the famous phrase "Nunc est Bibendum" which translates from Latin as "now it's time to drink". The round-shaped man, made of tires raising a glass full of nails and glass shards was flanked on either side by characters designed similarly but much smaller and sickly, likely to have represented his concurrence. The phrase "Le pneu Michelin boit l'obstacle" was added below, which literally translated means "The Michelin tire drinks the obstacle".

The Michelin man, soon known as Bibendum, was born. His first introduction was in a black and white newspaper ad, where he was shown driving a car. The next was in the form of the poster that was designed by O'Galop, and used for years, occasionally adding accessories like tins of rubber cement, tools, and a compressed air bottle to the foreground, until 1914 when the last version was printed with a blue background. But this was not the last of O'Galop, As you are about to discover we owe him credit for many of our most prized collectibles, as he became the principal graphic artist for the Michelin brothers. One thing was for certain Michelin had found in Bibendum the perfect spokesman and was about to reward him with immortality. Bibendum was voted by an international panel in the 1990s most recognizable and oldest advertising character in the world, having been in continuous use since his creation in 1898.



My Start

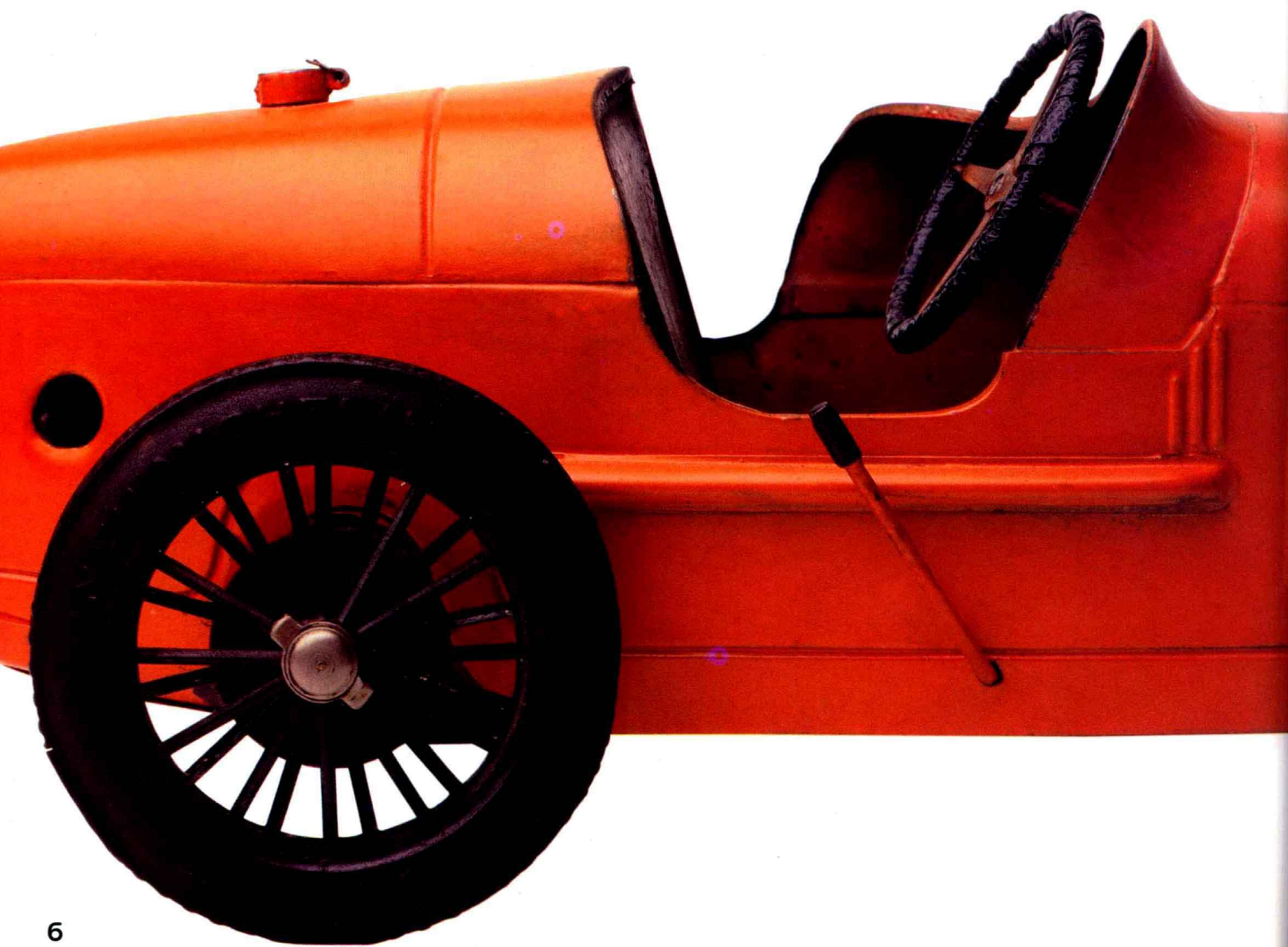
The collection started in the mid to late 1980s with a series of impulse buys. I had no real intentions, at first, of starting a new collection. I was already collecting various soda brands signs, advertising figures and toys; the Bibendum just reminded me of my native land. The first Bibendum piece I ever came across was a Bakelite ashtray with Bib seated at the back. Next came a truck figure from the 40s found at Brimfield, and a few months later, at a Pennsylvania toy show, I bought a great 1940s tin sign with Bib riding a motorcycle from a Spanish dealer. I went home that day and put all three pieces together and that really did it; I wanted more... lots more!

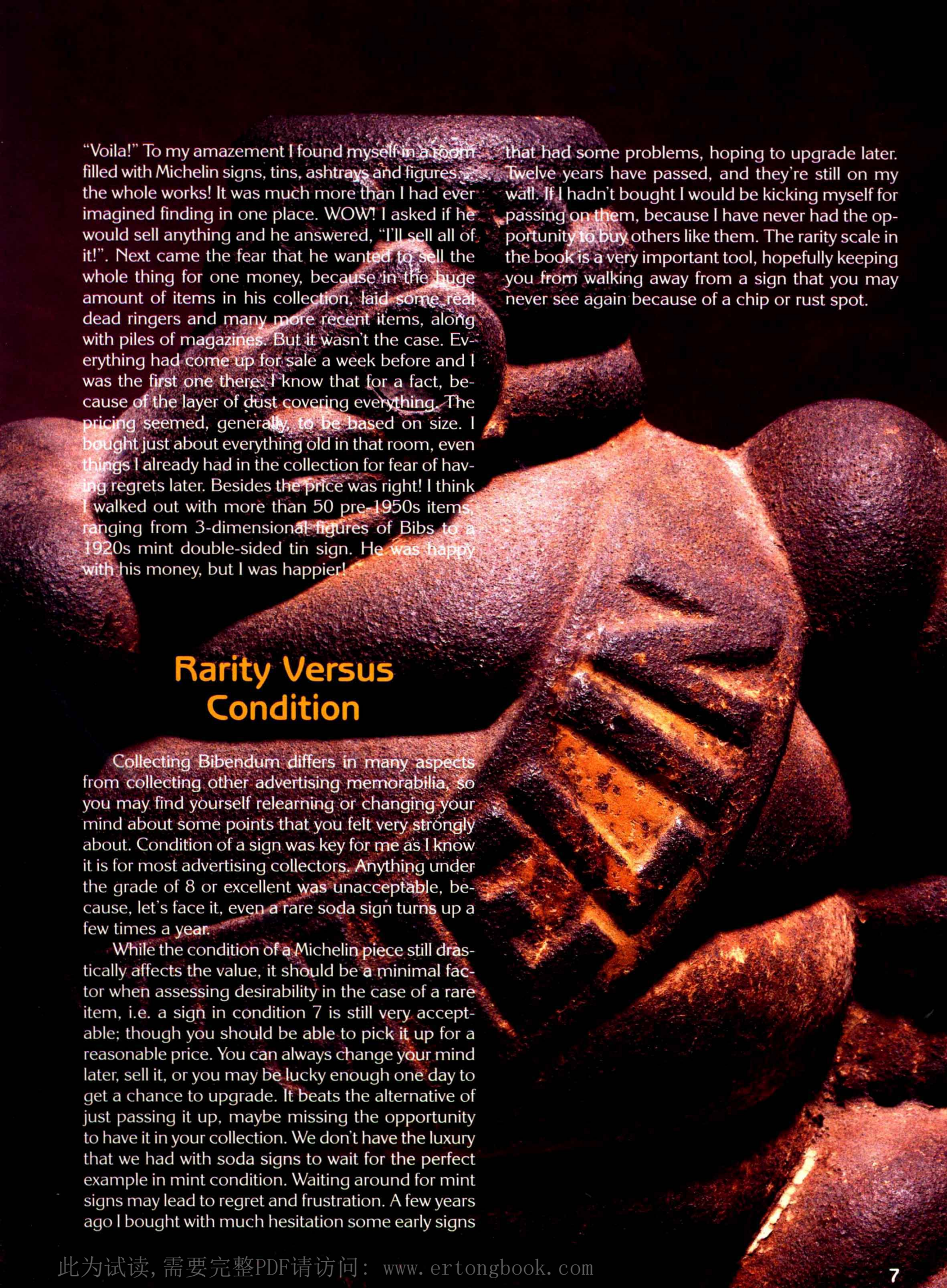
I called every advertising dealer I knew in the U.S., asking if they had anything Michelin, but no one had anything to offer. I realized that they had never sold anything memorable or at least worth mentioning.

With the fast growing interest of gas and oil collectibles, shows became more frequent and spe-

cialized auctions started to emerge. I was finally able to network with people that at least had interest and knowledge of some advertising pieces in collections. I met a few French dealers that had started coming into the United States on a regular basis, setting up at Hershey and Brimfield. They specialized in early automobilia and, much to my delight, they always had Michelin items for sale.

My real beginner's luck story happened in Paris. I bought a newspaper on antiques, and found an advertisement for a 1930s Michelin die-cut cardboard sign. In this window or counter display, Bib was dressed as a child in a sailor's outfit. The price was \$400 and the seller lived a train ride away, so off I went. When I got there the cardboard sign was on the kitchen table looking fantastic! Of course I bought it, and when I asked the man if he knew much about Michelin or where I could find other things for sale, every collector's dream come true. He led me to a room and pushed the door open.





"Voila!" To my amazement I found myself in a room filled with Michelin signs, tins, ashtrays and figures the whole works! It was much more than I had ever imagined finding in one place. WOW! I asked if he would sell anything and he answered, "I'll sell all of it!". Next came the fear that he wanted to sell the whole thing for one money, because in the huge amount of items in his collection, laid some real dead ringers and many more recent items, along with piles of magazines. But it wasn't the case. Everything had come up for sale a week before and I was the first one there. I know that for a fact, because of the layer of dust covering everything. The pricing seemed, generally, to be based on size. I bought just about everything old in that room, even things I already had in the collection for fear of having regrets later. Besides the price was right! I think I walked out with more than 50 pre-1950s items, ranging from 3-dimensional figures of Bibs to a 1920s mint double-sided tin sign. He was happy with his money, but I was happier!

that had some problems, hoping to upgrade later. Twelve years have passed, and they're still on my wall. If I hadn't bought I would be kicking myself for passing on them, because I have never had the opportunity to buy others like them. The rarity scale in the book is a very important tool, hopefully keeping you from walking away from a sign that you may never see again because of a chip or rust spot.

Rarity Versus Condition

Collecting Bibendum differs in many aspects from collecting other advertising memorabilia, so you may find yourself relearning or changing your mind about some points that you felt very strongly about. Condition of a sign was key for me as I know it is for most advertising collectors. Anything under the grade of 8 or excellent was unacceptable, because, let's face it, even a rare soda sign turns up a few times a year.

While the condition of a Michelin piece still drastically affects the value, it should be a minimal factor when assessing desirability in the case of a rare item, i.e. a sign in condition 7 is still very acceptable; though you should be able to pick it up for a reasonable price. You can always change your mind later, sell it, or you may be lucky enough one day to get a chance to upgrade. It beats the alternative of just passing it up, maybe missing the opportunity to have it in your collection. We don't have the luxury that we had with soda signs to wait for the perfect example in mint condition. Waiting around for mint signs may lead to regret and frustration. A few years ago I bought with much hesitation some early signs

Foreign or American?

The majority of Michelin advertising pieces between 1900s and 1960s are French in origin, but not all. Many were made in the countries where they were meant to be distributed or displayed. Many giveaways and signs were made in the US and are, of course, my favorites, but don't shy away from European items; you would be robbing yourself of the finest advertising signs and memorabilia related to automobiles. It may take some time getting used to, but collecting Michelin isn't about collecting Americana, Bibendum from the very start was an international celebrity. Michelin opened factories and headquarters throughout the world at an amazing speed, including France in 1832, England in 1904, Turin, Italy in 1906, and Milltown, New Jersey in the USA in 1907. Many signs, posters, and giveaways in foreign languages or with no text at all, were also produced in France to be exported as advertising for their products elsewhere in the world. Tire pressure gauges and puncture repair kits also came with directions in several languages.

Most Michelin items are of superior quality, and designed specifically for the company rather than some as generic giveaway with the Bibendum stamped on it. In the early years owning a car wasn't

within everyone's reach and, therefore, the advertising had to appeal to an elite clientele. All over the world Michelin not only produced advertising signs but a long line of advertising giveaways and merchandise, including toys for children in the effigy of the Bibendum. While you will rarely find an item from the Michelin Company without Bib on it, you will find him without the Michelin name.

American advertising is found from 1907 through the early 1930s, and then there is nothing until the 1960s. This is because the Milltown New Jersey factory closed in 1930, during the Depression.



Grading the Condition

Trying to communicate the condition of an item can get very confusing without a good photo. In the case of an auction catalog the image is usually so small that scratches and marks don't even show. This often leads to confusion, misunderstanding and most often a waste of time for everyone. Since condition is so important when evaluating whether or not you are willing to pay the price for something, it is important to be accurate. When dealing with a foreign collector or dealer, I found it best to use a scale 5 thru 10, 10 being best condition possible and 5 being worst condition, it is a system that seems to be universal and most of all it is relevant to a wide range of collectors. The basic chart below should be helpful:

10	Mint	Perfect, no marks, no flaws or sign of age whatsoever
9	Near Mint	Near perfect, very minor hardly noticeable marks
8	Excellent	Nice condition, small scratches or chips or minor fading
7	Very good	Noticeable problems, bends, rust or stains, still acceptable
6	Good	Evident damage and aging, creases, folds, holes, etc...
5	Poor	Very severe damage, usually no value

Both of these systems are often used more precisely. For example, 8.5 would have an equivalent of Excellent +.

Using the Rarity Guide

At the end of the description of each item, you will find a "Rarity" rating, based on how many pieces in excellent or better condition I have encountered or have knowledge of in collections, both in the United States and abroad. I believe this important information will be very useful. It seems to be accurate although it is based on my personal experience and new finds are made everyday. It is however only a guide and the author accepts no responsibility for any gain or loss the reader may experience as a result of using this guide.

10	Only one example known to me
9	Very rare, less than 10 known to me
8	Rare
7	Hard to find
6	Obtainable
5	Common
4	Very common

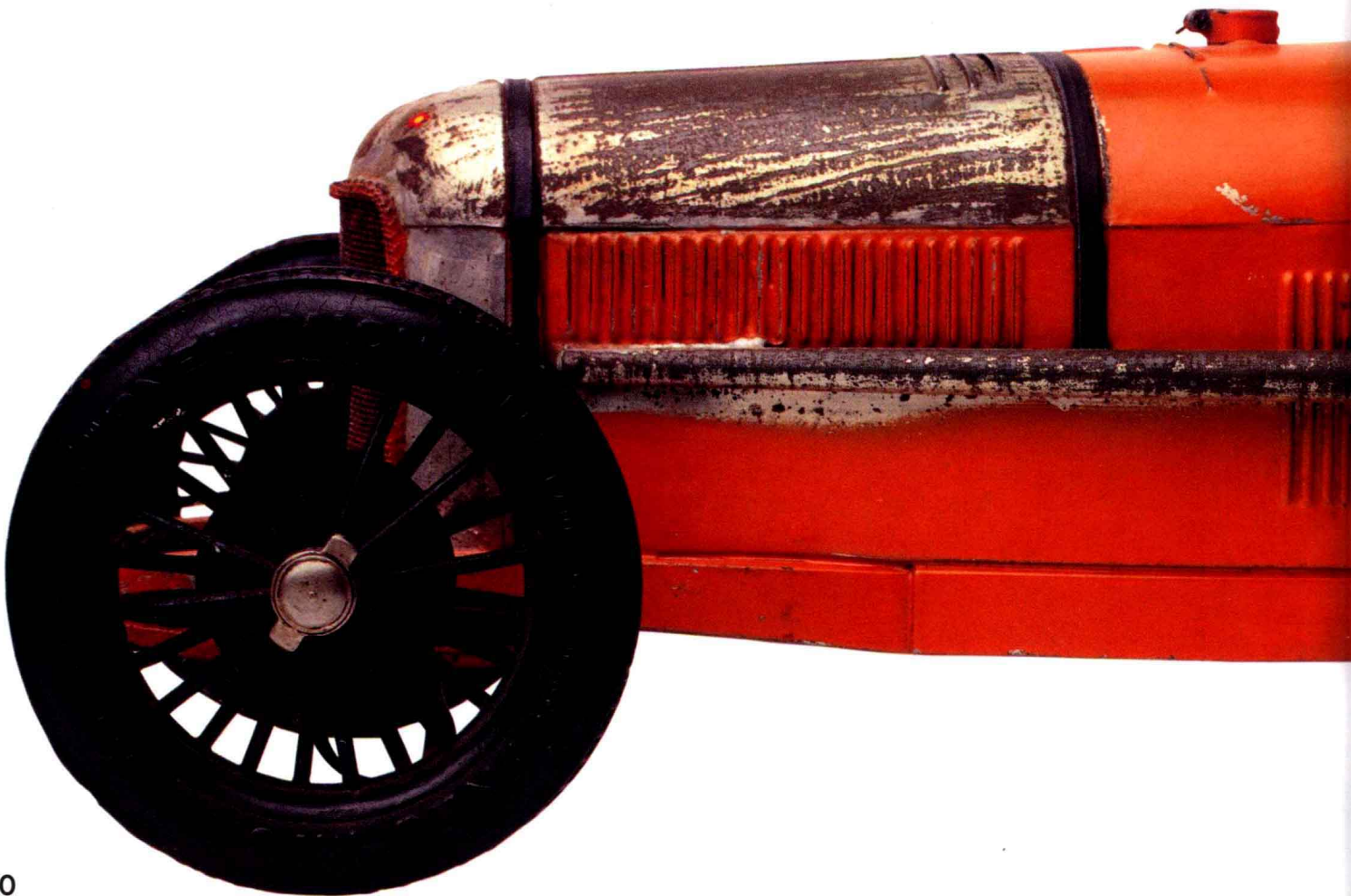
Using the Price Guide

When a price guide is written for an international group of collectors, many factors affect it, including geography, economy and trends. I have based this price guide on an item in excellent or 8.0 condition (see condition guide). Therefore, one in lesser condition would be worth considerably less and one in better condition would be worth considerably more. The US\$ amount after the description of an item is not for the item photographed but for what someone could expect to pay for one like it in excellent condition at auction or from a dealer. Rarity also plays a role in determining a value; if, in the future, an item is found in large quantities it is no longer as rare and, therefore, is worth considerably less. I tried to be as accurate and consistent as possible. It was by far the most difficult part of this book, and I hope you will find it comprehensive and useful. It is however only a guide and the author accepts no responsibility for any gain or loss the reader may experience as a result of using this guide.



Chapter One

Paper Posters and Cardboard Signs





From the birth of Bibendum in 1898 until 1914 this poster by O'Galop was produced in different sizes, with many variants. Some later examples with blue backgrounds show some of the accessories available at that time, such as rubber cement, tools, compressed air bottles, and pressure gauges. Earlier examples like this one simply demonstrate how the Michelin man is able to drink the obstacles unlike his competitors who are portrayed here as sickly and weak. The example shown was meant to be displayed indoors. It originally came coated with a thin layer of varnish and had a thin metal hanger on the top and bottom. Unfortunately this was usually trimmed off by poster dealers to facilitate the mounting on linen. The usual size is 47" x 63". The poster shown here measures 14" x 17" without the metal hangers and was offered in 1907, printed by Imp. Lemercier, Paris. All these different versions are equally rare, however the earliest versions are the most sought after making them the most expensive, this is also how the Michelin man became known as Bibendum.

1907 paper hanger poster by O'Galop. Rarity 9. \$1,500; with original hangers add. \$250. Larger 1898 to 1914 paper posters by O'Galop. Rarity 8-9. \$2,500 to \$4,000

1905 paper poster by O'Galop, known as "Le coup de Semelle." Usually seen in a much larger format of 47" x 63" with either a red or blue background, this version is only 23" x 31" with a burgundy background. Also notice the absence of text, suggesting that this poster was to be displayed overseas. *Courtesy "Gallery Estampe Moderne et Sportive."* Rarity 10





Paper poster by O'Galop, Imp Chaix, Paris, 1911. Several slight variations of this poster exist, differing mostly in the shading of the background and without the O'Galop signature. Either way it is a favorite classic image. France 32" x 47 1/2". Rarity 8. \$1,250

Cardboard display, c. 1910. Very scarce cardboard stringer for displaying tire repair tins. One of the earliest advertising pieces, showing not one but six Bibendums. France, 14 3/4" x 10 1/2". Collection Damien Delabre. Rarity 10.





Paper poster, 1911. Anonymous artist, Imp. Chaix, Paris. This poster is rarely seen, possibly because it was designed as an indoor poster. The quality and durability of the paper may have been less than its outdoor counterparts. France, 23 1/2" x 30 1/2". Collection Damien Delabre. Rarity 9. \$1,250

Paper poster by Roowy, Imp Chaix, Paris, 1912. One of the most appealing posters for its unusual 3-D effect. France, 31" x 47". Rarity 8. \$1,250

