

## Miniatures Marketplace - June 2000

### LET'S TALK ABOUT TRADE SHOWS

By Barbara Schuckman

Miniatures BY BARB

Oh, not again.....more trade show hype. Is that what you are thinking? Well, you are right. Trade shows are important and warrant a lot of promotion. Where else can you network with other shop proprietors sharing similar goals and problems? How else can you meet with an array of vendors catering to your specific needs? Trade shows are exhausting! However they can also be exhilarating. Shows can be expensive, but, if they are worked correctly, can be well worth the time, money and effort.

Our industry has two trade shows this summer. The CIMTA (Cottage Industry Miniaturists Trade Association) will meet in Washington, D.C. in June and MIAA (Miniatures Industry Association of America) will meet in Atlantic City, NJ in August. Plan on attending.

Start making arrangements now. You will need to plan your mode of transportation and hotel accommodations. Staying at the host hotel not only helps the organization, it allows you to be close to the action. You will see familiar faces. When you do, stop and chat. You have a lot in common. You never know what you might learn or what you can teach someone else. Plans will need to be made for you shop. Can you get someone to watch the store while you are away? Or, can you close for a few days leaving an enticing sign for your customers. Inform them where you are going and that you will be bringing back new and exciting products and ideas.

When you attend the show don't miss a thing. Plan on participating in workshops. Learn new crafting techniques and materials. Attend as many workshops as you can. I have never attended a workshop in which I didn't learn something new. Keep your eyes and ears open. Ask questions of the artisans and manufacturers giving the workshops. Exchange ideas with your fellow shop owners.

Attend the seminars and discussion groups. Gather information and enthusiasm. You are spending a lot of money and time attending the Trade Show obtain as much as you can from the opportunity.

Review the handout material and the list of exhibitors. Decide who you must see. Make sure you know who is presenting show specials, discounts or gifts. Plan out your route. Get up early. Wear comfortable clothing. Stop and regroup when you get tired. Yes, you are at the show to buy merchandise. But, remember, much of the merchandise can be ordered later. Most companies have fax machines, e-mail addresses and 800 numbers. You are here to meet your suppliers and learn. Try to spend a few moments with as many suppliers as you can. Let them tell you about their products. Who can inform you of the features and benefits of their products better than the manufacturers and handcrafters themselves?

Don't forget to bring something with you in which to tote all of the information you will be gathering. Pick up catalogs and price sheets as you go. For future reference make note of what

interested you. Keep these on file so that when a customer asks you for that special item you will know from whom you can order it.

Meet the representatives of our industries publications. This is the opportunity to make your needs known. Make sure you have subscriptions for these publications. When you are back in your own mini world these publications will keep you in touch with the larger miniature community.

Keep in mind that we all need time to unwind. If you have not been to the show city before make some time to see it. Stay at least one extra day. Take a quick tour. Visit a local miniature shop or miniature museum. Check out what the city has to offer before you arrive. You can find information on the internet for the show cities at [www.washingtondc.com](http://www.washingtondc.com) and [www.atlanticcitynj.com](http://www.atlanticcitynj.com) or [www.acfunbook.com](http://www.acfunbook.com). What a disappointment to find out after you return home that you missed a great opportunity.

Start now. Research the upcoming shows. Plan on attending. You will return to your shop renewed with current products, innovative ideas and new friendships.