

Terry Kovel

10 COLLECTIBLES NOT WORTH COLLECTING ANYMORE

Are you expecting those Hummel figurines to help pay your kids' college tuition? Better hope the kids earn scholarships.

Collecting is fun, but it is a perilous investment if you choose the wrong collectibles. *Here are 10 once-popular collectibles that are now worth much less than people imagine...*

■ **Hummel figurines** once sold for hundreds of dollars apiece, but the generation that appreciated these little porcelain statues is now downsizing or dying off, dumping Hummels back into the market by the thousands.

Younger generations have little interest in buying them. Most used Hummels now sell for no more than \$75 in shops, with prices likely to continue to fall as more Hummels reach the market.

Other cute little figurines have suffered a similar fate. Precious Moments figurines, sold as collectibles, now have very little monetary value.

Exception: Certain rare Hummels, such as those taller than 12 inches or those made before 1949, still can fetch four figures.

■ **Anything made by the Franklin Mint.** The company sells a wide selection of "limited edition" coins, plates, medals and other collectibles, but there's little resale market for any of it. Anyone who wants a Franklin Mint product usually buys it from the company when it is being heavily advertised. Franklin Mint coins and medals typically can fetch their meltdown

value when resold, which usually is a fraction of the amount that the company originally charged (though today's high precious metals prices have lifted those resale values somewhat).

Other companies that make and heavily market collectible coins and plates include the Danbury Mint and Royal Copenhagen. Their products fare no better on the resale market.

■ **Longaberger baskets**—handcrafted wood baskets made by the Longaberger Company of Newark, Ohio—became a hot collectible in the 1990s, with some selling for upward of \$100. The company then began issuing expensive limited-edition baskets as collectibles. The Longaberger basket resale market soon collapsed, and today you would be lucky to get more than \$20 for most of them.

■ **Limited-edition Barbie dolls** have been declining significantly in value. As with most other "limited edition" toys, these were toys in name only—most were never played with, just set aside as investments, so they never became any rarer. Meanwhile, Mattel issued so many different limited-edition Barbies over the years that few collectors could collect them all, and most stopped trying.

Exception: Early Barbies dating from 1959 through the 1960s in top condition still can have considerable value. It's the modern ones, originally sold at high prices as collectibles, that are likely to be worth less than initially paid.

■ **Thomas Kinkade paintings and prints** were produced in such huge quantities that they now have very limited resale value. If you paid retail prices for these paintings at a Thomas Kinkade Signature Gallery—there were more than 300 such galleries in the 1990s—you almost certainly will never recover most of the hundreds or thousands of dollars you paid. Scores of Kinkades are available on eBay, and most receive no bids.

■ **Autographed sports memorabilia** have declined sharply in value in the past decade. Collectors are disenchanted as it has become clear that many autographs are forgeries. Signed sports memorabilia now have value only if they come with proof of authenticity, such as verification from an authentication company such as PSA/DNA (www.psaCard.com) or James Spence Authentication (www.Spencelo.com).

Helpful: If you ask an athlete to sign something for you, have a picture taken of you with the athlete as he/she is doing the signing to verify authenticity.

■ **Vintage metal lunch boxes** became a major collectible in the late 1980s, and by the 1990s, some were selling for thousands of dollars. But today, few lunch boxes fetch more than \$100, and most bring much less.

Exception: A lunch box still might have significant value if it features a picture of something that is collected in its own right. A 1950s Superman lunch box or a 1960s Star Trek lunch

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box might bring thousands, for example—but that's because Superman or Star Trek collectors want them, not because lunch box collectors will pay that much.

■ **Cookie jars** became a hot collecting category after Andy Warhol's cookie jar collection was auctioned for steep prices following his 1987 death. For a while, collectors were paying hundreds or occasionally thousands of dollars for cookie jars that weren't even very old.

Eventually people figured out that Warhol's cookie jars were valuable only because Warhol owned them, not because cookie jars themselves have any great collectible value. Today, most formerly "collectible" cookie jars sell for less than \$50, depending on design and condition. Very few sell for more.

■ **China sets** are declining rapidly in value. Many china sets from Royal Copenhagen, Royal Worcester, Lenox and Wedgwood sell at half the price

of new china. Others bring \$150 to \$200 at estate sales, if they sell at all. Sets with flowery patterns, including Haviland china, are particularly unloved.

■ **Collectible plates** featuring pictures by artists such as Norman Rockwell or LeRoy Neiman typically are worth less than \$5 per plate these days—and that's if they date to before 1980 or so. Those produced within the past 30 years usually have no value. ■■