



A typical Mignot boxed display depicts a French army canteen.

Mignot: A Different Perspective

James H. Hillestad elaborates on displaying some classic figures in diorama settings

TEXT AND PHOTOS: JAMES H. HILLESTAD

CBG Mignot has long been known for stylish figures. In production since 1825, they have a unique elegance that sets them apart from others and gives them an artistic charm.

Further enhancing the French-made figures' appeal, they are often presented in colorful display boxes. A French army canteen vignette in my collection is a typical example. For the collector, it is like having a ready-made diorama.

I have always had a fascination for

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this innovative and creative packaging. It spotlights the 54-mm metal figures and creates specific context which miniature soldiers or civilians standing alone on a shelf do not have.

Taking this thought a step further, I decided to expand on the Mignot concept by designing settings that would allow for dozens of figures to interact amid historic events and architectural elements.

Here are two dioramas which use mostly Mignot figures.

PALATIAL FONTAINEBLEAU

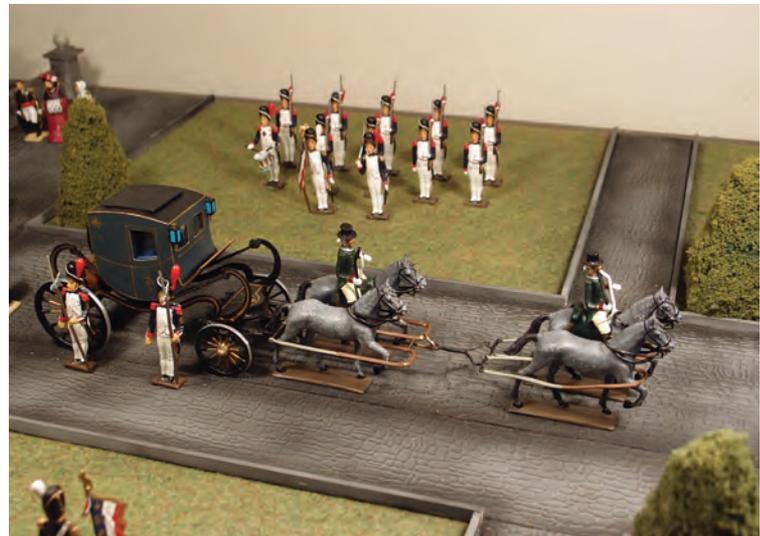
France's Palace of Fontainebleau is located about 34 miles southeast of Paris and dates to 1137. It parallels the



The Imperial Guard lines up for a final inspection at Fontainebleau before Napoleon goes into exile on the isle of Elba.



Magnificent staircases enhance the model palace.



After Napoleon's abdication, a coach stands ready to carry him to a ship to embark on the voyage into banishment on Elba.



Dressed in a greatcoat, Napoleon bids farewell to loyal officers at Fontainebleau in a tableau featuring Mignot figures.

development of England's Windsor Castle in that it, too, was enlarged through the years by the various sovereigns.

This can be seen in Fontainebleau's irregularities. For example, note the unmatched dormers, chimney and wall fountains on the model's first floor.

It was at Fontainebleau that Emperor Napoleon I, after his defeat in Russia, abdicated his throne. In my diorama, he is shown in April 1814 bidding farewell to his troops before departing for exile on the Mediterranean island of Elba.

GARDEN OF TUILERIES

The Jardin des Tuileries is located between the Louvre Museum and the Place de la Concorde in Paris. Created by Catherine de Medici in 1564, the garden opened to the public in 1667.

The garden is bordered by the Seine River on the south in an



Mignot figures animate Jim Hillestad's diorama inspired by the Jardin des Tuileries in Paris.



Parisians cheer as Napoleon arrives by coach at the public garden.

area of workshops (called "tuileries") which make tiles for building rooftops. My diorama depicts Napoleon arriving to dedicate a monument to the Imperial French Navy. The military figures are by Mignot. The civilian onlookers were made of plastic by Starlux of France. ■

ABOUT THE WRITER

James H. Hillestad is the proprietor of The Toy Soldier Museum and shop in Cresco, Pa., USA.

Right: A Marine band plays as Napoleon's coach arrives for the dedication ceremony at the garden in France's capital city.



The Tuileries diorama's premise is that Napoleon is about to dedicate a monument to the Imperial French Navy.

