

DEALERS: Are your walls working for you?

Author: Doug Stabler - Source:CHINAMOTOR



The walls of your showroom can be more than a place for posters or sticky notes. That's valuable space. Those walls could be making money for you.

At the Powersports Dealer Expo in Indianapolis, Indiana USA this

February I saw acres of new products. Among all those booths, one that caught my attention was Autographed Collectables. Miguel Ramos, with a charming Australian accent, told me about his products. His company obtains memorabilia from famous athletes, has the athlete sign the product, and makes these valuable pieces available to buyers. He carries not only photos, but also race pants, shirts, race visors, knee sliders, boots, and helmets - each item signed by the champion who wore them.

Here is Miguel's Story:

A native of Australia, in 1996 Miguel spent several months with family in Detroit, Michigan. He discovered a booming business in autographed memorabilia – posters, programs and artifacts that had belonged to celebrities, and were signed by the previous owner. There was nothing like that at home in Australia, even though people there were sports crazy. At nineteen, Miguel started his own business in autographed memorabilia. Starting with home grown heroes such as Multiple 500cc World Champion, Mick Doohan, he expanded his client list. You want names of some of his clients? The list is long, but here are a few:

Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, Valentino Rossi, Nicky Hayden, Colin Edwards, Max Biaggi, Travis Pastrana, Jeremy McGrath, Ricky Carmichael, Chad Reed, James Stewart, Roger DeCoster, Wayne Gardner, Wayne Rainey, Freddie Spencer, Eddie Lawson, Kevin Schwantz, Kenny Roberts Senior, Fernando Alonso, Kimi Raikkonen, Juan Pablo Montoya, Mark Webber, Rubens Barichello. And let's not forget Evel Knievel, Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan, & LeBron James.

Miguel attends every signing session to witness all autographs. A photo from the signing session is incorporated into the Guarantee of Authenticity confirming the date and location of the signing along with the edition size.

Today, Miguel is Managing Director of Autographed Collectibles. In May 2010 he opened an office in Los Angeles, California. He has been granted an E2 investors visa from US Immigration so he can oversee his U.S. business and show up at trade shows. His

company handles all the framing and installation of plaques that detail the signed photos. Miguel says it's the only way to control quality and provide the best service.

His new California office recently invested \$100,000 on new equipment for framing and finishing the pieces. Customers are free to browse in the showroom.



Miguel described the steps he takes to produce his high quality products:

1. Negotiate a (confidential) merchandise contract with the athlete. This can easily run to \$60,000.
2. Negotiate to purchase the best photos, with 100% forever rights, meaning no one else can ever use these shots, or have them reproduced.
3. Send photos to his photo lab for clean up, cropping, and printing.
4. The photos are shipped to the location where the athlete will meet for the private signing.
5. The signed items are sent to the offices in Sydney and Los Angeles to be professionally framed and fully assembled.
6. A unique tamper-proof serial number is attached to each signed item. This corresponds to the number on the Guarantee of Authenticity.
7. Each Framed piece has an envelope on the back that contains the photo from the signing and the Guarantee of Authenticity.
8. The last step accounts for the biggest share of budget costs: worldwide marketing.

These items don't come cheap. The average retail price is about \$300-400, although pieces have sold for over \$10,000.00. The nice thing is that if you are a dealership, you can buy at wholesale, and sell your wall art for a handsome profit. The pieces are released in very short, limited editions of around 50 to 200. When an edition sells out, that is it. There will never be a 2nd or 3rd run. He may however have some new pieces from your favorites, so keep an eye on his web site.

I asked Miguel if Autographed Collectables has any well known customers. "Quite a few. A lot of the athletes' we work with like to have pieces for their own collection. Like Nicky Hayden wanted an Evel Knievel signed piece. He's a good guy, so I made sure Santa brought him one for Christmas. Valentino Rossi wanted a Muhammad Ali piece, as he's a big fan. Rossi is also a huge Jeremy McGrath fan, and vice versa. So, I had Valentino sign a photo for Jeremy, and then Jeremy signed one back in return. They were both so excited, it was funny to see".

Yamaha USA recently purchased 200 signed pieces for their top 50 dealerships. Each Dealership received 4 pieces: James Stewart, Jorge Lorenzo, Valentino Rossi, and Ben Spies. Fay Myers Motorcycle World of Denver buys roughly 60 pieces per year. Other big dealers selling quite a few each month are Used Bike Emporium of Hanover Maryland, Motocross Giant of Canoga Park, California, and F1 Racing Gear of Newcastle England.

I gotta be honest. I couldn't resist. I reached into my wallet and bought 5 pieces the first day. Now I am up to 9 or more.

Check out Autographed Collectables web site at www.air23.com.au

Note: You do not have to be a Wholesale account or motorcycle dealer to purchase these exquisite pieces. Go to the website and order or phone Miguel in his Anaheim office, + 1 714 447 6774.

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Let me know your thoughts!