

Park Cities People

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Investing in Antiques is a Wise Decision

Rest assured, the return on the items will be well worth the initial costs



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Antiques have been considered a third-tier investment by some financial experts. I would offer another opinion, given the volatility of the stock market, which has experienced two large drops in the last 25 years, and the many fluctuations in the real estate market.

Fine antiques — especially 18th and 19th century furniture, accessories, and paintings — are steadily rising in value each year. I have never seen a decrease.

Ruth Taylor, an estate dealer for more than 35 years, stated she could not agree more: Antiques' values rise an average of 5 percent a year, there is always a market for antiques, and the general population is about 85 percent traditional in their taste, which affects resale. Ruth said she would much rather have a home full of antiques than reproductions.

Other experts and personal experience prove those stats and more. Ten years ago, I purchased a tortoiseshell tea caddy for \$1,600, which I thought was pricey. In an upscale antique shop recently, a similar one was priced at \$8,750, a wonderful return on investment.

Antiques of the 18th and 19th century are especially valuable because the entire object was made by hand — every inch. There are very few craftsmen who have this expertise today and so, as time goes on, there will be fewer handmade objects for sale. Did you know

American antiques are the most expensive of all the different styles in the world? One of the reasons is there were so few of them made. Mass produced new furniture is very much like a new car — when it is taken off the showroom floor, it tends to decrease immediately, by one-third to one-half of purchase price.

When considering antiques, think of this: How many industries do you know of today which would make a copper plate and antique paper to reproduce fine antique prints or make fine porcelains and hand paint them? These have become lost arts. And the ones who embrace these processes, their items are very expensive. The artisans are rare, and it's getting more difficult to find craftspeople who maintain these art forms and many others.

Some guidelines for making your antique investment: Buy the best you can afford. Look for pieces in perfect condition and keep them in perfect condition. See if there is an artist's signature or foundry's stamp. Ask for the provenance, a written record of ownership and authenticity.



Courtesy Photo

This 18th-century French commode's look was completed with an antique brass candlestick lamp and an 18th century French statue.

A good way to learn more is to visit museums to train your eye, take classes, and deal with a reputable antique dealer or a member of the American Society of Interior Designers. Buy magazines and books on the subject. Attend auctions to see what items are truly worth and what people will pay. Heritage Auction Galleries and Dallas Auction Gallery are two excellent choices, and I highly recommended watching PBS's Antiques Roadshow.

I think you will agree that learning about and investing in antiques can be a fun and profitable venture. Happy antiquing!

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