



ANTIQUÉ & ESTATE JEWELRY PRIMER

Antique jewelry can be a great value or a disappointment. Prior to purchasing antique jewelry, it is always a good idea to do a bit of research on the topic.

A number of antiques shows will vet their dealers by inspecting the various categories of antiques displayed for sale. Items that are overly restored and those that do not fall under the classification of antique are removed. Some dealers, for example, will display jewelry that have antique mountings, but are set with "new" stones, such as blue topaz. Other times multiples of the same mounting are displayed: proof that these pieces are reproductions.

U.S. Customs defines "antique" as over 100 years old. Yet dealers oftentimes use the word to refer to pieces that fit into a recognized period, which, in some circumstances, includes pieces even less than 50 years old.

Renaissance (14th-17th Centuries)

Rarely found at antique shows. Look for enameled and chased metal embellished with crudely cut diamonds, pearls and agates.

Georgian (C. 1714-1820)

Jewelry is often set with multiple stones and tends to be silver topped and gold backed. Diamonds and pearls are favorite accents of this era.

Art Nouveau (1890-1909)

Jewelry takes on an oriental flair and designs are more sensuous. Examples of such designs include beautiful women with long, flowing hair and wisps of smoke, snaking around gemstones.

Arts & Crafts (1894-1923)

Jewelry is hand-crafted, simple, clean and sometimes folksy, but always unique.

Art Deco (1920s-30s)

Jewelry reflects emergence of the machine age and infusion of cubism into the art world. Note the use of platinum and daring combinations of colored precious stones and metal.

Retro (1940s)

Jewelry has a bold look and uses strong interactive green, rose, white and yellow gold. Rubies and diamonds are favored.

Cocktail (1940s-50s)

Bold designs of the 1940s gave way to the wartime economy. The 1950s cocktail designs emerge with mesh bracelets, cluster rings and generally subdued designs.

Today, buyers often hear the terms "vintage" (of a time) and "estate" (pre owned). As a buyer, always ask for a complete description of the antique jewelry your purchasing. Make sure to ask the dealer to write up a thorough receipt, as many insurance companies may accept this as an appraisal. Ask about the dealer's return policy.