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EUROPEAN VINTAGE EMPORIUM
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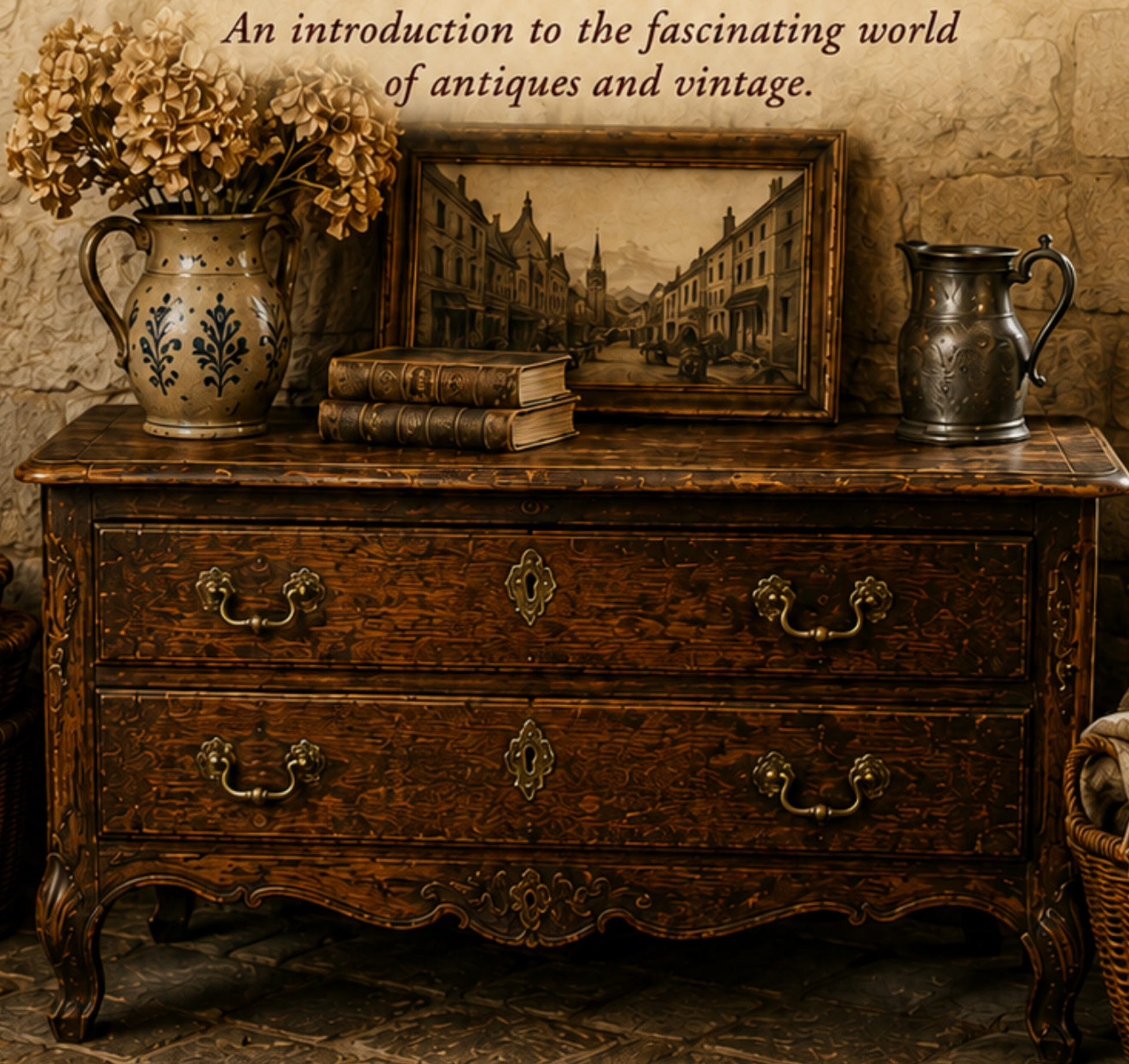
A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO
**EUROPEAN
ANTIQUES & VINTAGE**

LOOKING CLOSER • ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS • DISCOVERING THE STORY

No. 001

THE FIRST CHAPTER

*An introduction to the fascinating world
of antiques and vintage.*



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Antiques connect us to the past.
Knowledge helps us understand them.
Curiosity keeps the story alive.

Thank you for being part of that story.

KNOWLEDGE PRESERVES.
CURIOSITY DISCOVERS.
STORIES LIVE ON.



INTRODUCTION

Vintage is more than old things.
It is a connection to the past.

Every vintage item has a story to tell, shaped by the hands that made it, the lives that used it and the times in which it existed.

Collecting vintage is a journey of discovery. It rewards curiosity, patience and an appreciation for craftsmanship and history.

This guide is here to help you understand what vintage means, how it differs from antiques and how you can begin (or deepen) your own collecting journey.

Whether you are drawn to the elegance of mid-century design, the charm of retro kitchenware or the nostalgia of classic toys, vintage collecting is a hobby that offers endless variety and satisfaction.

*The past is not gone.
It is all around us,
waiting to be rediscovered.*



WHAT IS AN ANTIQUE?

An antique is generally any item that is at least 100 years old.

This simple rule of thumb is widely accepted by collectors, dealers, auction houses and insurance companies.

It is not just age, however, that defines an antique. True antiques are valued for their craftsmanship, materials, design, history and the story they carry from another time.

An antique is a reflection of the era in which it was made – the techniques used, the tastes of the time and the lives of the people who owned and used it.

Understanding what makes an antique an antique is the first step towards collecting with confidence and appreciation.

An antique is more than an old object – it is a survivor of time, holding history in its hands.

SO WHAT DOES “VINTAGE” MEAN?

The word vintage is used even more loosely than antique.

In general terms, people use vintage to describe items that are not old enough to be antiques but still have some age, character and quality.

Most collectors and dealers would put vintage somewhere between the 1940s and the 1980s. That’s a broad span, but it’s a useful guide.

Vintage items can include furniture, clothing, ceramics, glass, toys, electronics, tools, posters, jewellery and almost anything else.

The exact years can vary depending on what you are collecting and where you are in the world. Fashion, design and technology all move at different speeds.

Vintage is flexible. That is part of its appeal.

Vintage sits in the sweet spot between past and present – old enough to have a story, yet young enough to still be part of our lives.



ANTIQUE, VINTAGE OR RETRO?

A simple distinction worth remembering when you're buying.

These terms are often confused.

Antique

Generally 100 years old or more.

Vintage

Usually an older object associated with a particular period, often the 20th century, although usage varies.

Retro

Usually refers to something designed to imitate or deliberately evoke an earlier style.

A 1970s lamp is vintage. A lamp made in 2026 in the style of a 1970s lamp is retro.

That distinction can be useful when you're buying.



ANTIQUE

100 years
or more



VINTAGE

Usually from the
1940s–1980s



RETRO

Made to imitate
an earlier style

How Do You Tell How Old Something Is?

W

orking out the age of an object is often a bit like detective work.

There isn't usually one magic feature that tells you exactly when something was made.

Experienced dealers tend to look at the object as a whole.

THINGS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

1 CONSTRUCTION

- How is the object put together?
- Are the joints hand-made or machine-made?
- How are drawers constructed?
- What sort of nails, screws, pegs or glue have been used?

2 MATERIALS

- What materials were available at the time?
- How have they aged?

3 HARDWARE

Handles, hinges, locks, screws and other fittings can provide useful clues.

4 STYLE

Does the design fit the period it is supposed to come from?

5 WEAR

Does the wear appear consistent with genuine age and use?

6 FINISH

How has the surface been treated and how has that finish aged?

7 PROPORTION AND CONSTRUCTION

Sometimes the overall proportions and way something has been made tell you more than any single decorative feature.

HAND-CUT DOVETAILS

Irregularities suggest hand work and an earlier date.

WOOD & PATINA

Solid oak with a rich, worn patina built up over decades.

NAILS & PEGS

Hand-forged nails and wooden pegs are typical of earlier work.

ORIGINAL HINGE

Hand-forged hinge with screw heads that show age.

TURNED LEG

Turned front legs were common in this period.

DRAWER CONSTRUCTION

Thick solid sides with a separate wooden bottom board.

No single feature is absolute proof.

A replacement handle doesn't necessarily mean a piece is fake.

A modern screw doesn't necessarily mean the entire object is modern.

Antique objects were often repaired, altered and adapted during their lives.

That's normal.

WHY CONSTRUCTION MATTERS

One of the fascinating things about antiques is that the way something was made can tell you almost as much as what it looks like.

Traditional furniture makers developed techniques suited to the tools, materials and technology available to them.

Hand-cut dovetails don't look quite like machine-cut dovetails.

Hand-forged hardware has characteristics that differ from later factory-made components.

Traditional joinery leaves clues.

So does the way timber was cut, shaped and finished.

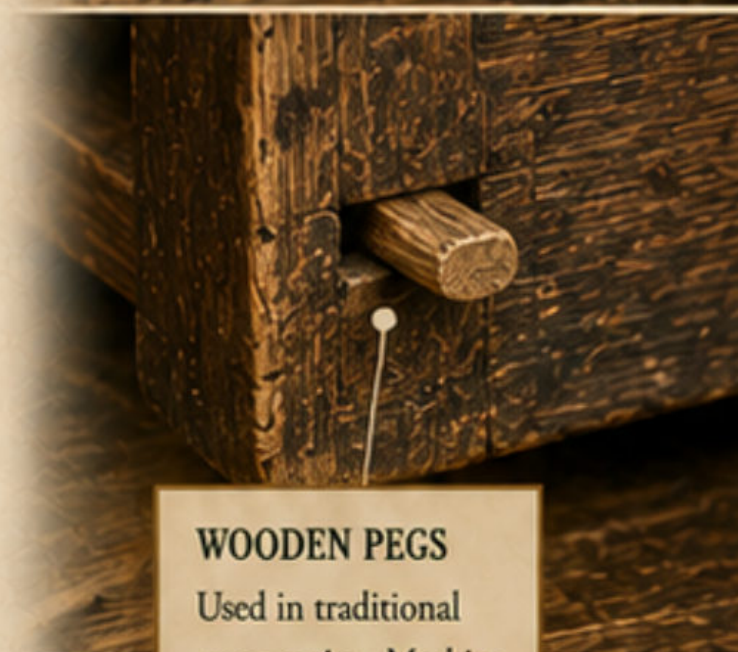
This is why a knowledgeable eye often looks beyond the decorative surface.

The object can tell you how it was made.

And sometimes that tells you when it was made.



HAND-CUT DOVETAILS
Slight variations in the shape and spacing are evidence of hand work.



WOODEN PEGS
Used in traditional construction. Machine manufacture rarely used wooden pegs.



HAND-FORGED HARDWARE
Irregularities, hammer marks and hand-finished details are typical of earlier work.



TOOL MARKS & FINISHES
Hand tools leave subtle marks that modern machines don't replicate in the same way.

WHAT ABOUT PATINA?



Few words are used more often in the antiques world than patina.

And few are more misunderstood.

Patina isn't simply dirt.

It refers to the changes that occur to a material over time through age, use, exposure and natural processes.

On wooden furniture, this might include changes in colour, surface texture and finish caused by decades of handling and exposure to light.

Metal develops its own forms of patina.

Leather changes.

Paint ages.

Even seemingly humble objects can develop surfaces that tell the story of their use.

This is one reason collectors are often reluctant to see every sign of age as a defect.

Wear can be part of an object's history.



WOOD

Time, touch and light deepen colour, soften edges and leave a surface with character.



METAL

Oxidation, wear and handling create patina that protects and beautifies.



HAND-FORGED IRON

Subtle rust tones, hammer marks and wear tell us about age, use and craftsmanship.



LEATHER

It softens, darkens and develops a sheen in the places it has been used.



PAINT

Cracks, chips and gentle fading create a surface shaped by time.



EVERYDAY OBJECTS

Bowls, jugs and tools can develop surfaces that speak of years of honest use.

**PATINA IS THE
VISIBLE RECORD
OF TIME WELL
SPENT.**

Understanding patina helps you appreciate authenticity, recognise natural age and avoid mistaking wear for damage.

GOOD PATINA

- ✓ Even, natural wear
- ✓ Consistent with age
- ✓ Adds depth and character
- ✓ Tells a true story

NOT GOOD PATINA

- ✗ Heavy dirt and grime
- ✗ Abrasive over-cleaning
- ✗ Artificial ageing
- ✗ Damage or neglect

DOES OLD MEAN VALUABLE?

A

ge matters, but value is usually a much more complicated equation.

No.

This is probably one of the biggest misconceptions about antiques.

An object can be very old, beautifully made and historically interesting — and still have relatively little monetary value.

Value can be influenced by many factors.

AGE ALONE DOESN'T DETERMINE VALUE



OLD BUT ORDINARY
18th Century Elm Stool

- Very old
- Plain and utilitarian
- Common survival
- Low demand

Low Value

YOUNGER BUT DESIRABLE
1900 Art Nouveau Chair

- Later in date
- High quality design
- Less common style
- Strong collector demand

High Value

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE VALUE



1. RARITY

How many examples survive?



2. QUALITY

How well was it made?



3. CONDITION

How much original material survives?



4. PROVENANCE

Does the object have an interesting or documented history?



5. MAKER

Was it produced by a recognised craftsman, workshop or manufacturer?



6. DESIGN

Is the piece particularly attractive, unusual or representative of an important style?



7. DEMAND

Do collectors actually want it?

And sometimes there's another factor that is rather difficult to quantify:

**DO PEOPLE
SIMPLY
LOVE IT?**



Because ultimately, objects are collected by people.



Age tells you where an object has been.



Value tells you what someone is willing to pay.



The two are related — but they are not the same.



Knowledge helps you understand value. Passion makes it worth more.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CRAFTSMANSHIP



Across Europe, local materials, tools and traditions created an extraordinary variety of craftsmanship.

One of the things that makes European antiques so fascinating is the extraordinary variety of traditional craftsmanship found across the continent.

Furniture makers, potters, glassmakers, metalworkers, textile producers and countless other craftsmen developed techniques that were often closely connected to their region.

French furniture isn't identical to English furniture.

Italian ceramics aren't the same as German ceramics.

Scandinavian design developed along a very different path from French decorative arts.

And even within a single country, regional differences can be significant.

This is why European antiques are not one single category.

They're an enormous collection of regional histories, traditions and influences.



SKILL. PATIENCE. PRIDE.

Traditional craftsmen learned their skills over years of practice.

Their work was built to last — and often improves with age.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES, DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER

FRANCE



Elegant forms, decorative detail and refined finishes.

ENGLAND



Solid construction, practical design and restrained style.

ITALY



Vibrant colour, traditional motifs and handcrafted individuality.

GERMANY



Functional pieces often with bold forms and strong regional character.

SCANDINAVIA



Clean lines, honest materials and understated elegance.

CRAFTSMANSHIP LEAVES CLUES

Look closely and you'll see the marks of the maker: tools used, joints created, finishes applied by hand.



"Good craftsmanship is an honest conversation between the maker, the material and time."

FURNITURE, CERAMICS, GLASS & EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

W

hen people think about antiques, they often think about furniture.

But the world is considerably larger.

At EVE, the fascinating part is often discovering the stories behind objects that weren't necessarily designed to become collectibles.

THERE ARE:

1. FURNITURE



Tables, chairs, cabinets, armoires, commodes, desks and countless other forms.

2. CERAMICS



Pottery, porcelain, earthenware and decorative pieces.

3. GLASS



From everyday household objects to highly decorative pieces.

4. CLOCKS



Objects combining craftsmanship, engineering and design.

5. DECORATIVE ARTS



Mirrors, boxes, candlesticks, ornaments and countless curious things.

6. KITCHENALIA & EVERYDAY OBJECTS



Some of the most interesting objects are the ones that were simply part of everyday life.

And then there are the things that don't fit neatly into any category.

Those can be particularly interesting.



The most unassuming objects often have the most interesting stories to tell."

WHY REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE MATTERS



One of the great pleasures of collecting European antiques is discovering that an object can tell you something about where it came from.

A piece of furniture might reveal its regional origins through its construction, timber, decoration or proportions.

A ceramic object might carry a maker's mark.

A textile might reflect local traditions.

A humble household object might have been produced for a very specific regional purpose.

Learning these differences makes collecting much more rewarding.

Instead of simply seeing:

"an old cupboard"

you begin to see:

"a traditional French provincial cupboard with characteristics associated with a particular region and period."

The object becomes a story rather than simply a thing.

EXAMPLE: A FRENCH PROVINCIAL CUPBOARD



CONSTRUCTION

Mortise and tenon joints, solid timber throughout. Built to last for generations.

TIMBER

Often local oak or walnut, used according to regional availability and tradition.

DECORATION

Floral motifs and colour palette typical of provincial French furniture of the 18th–19th century.

PROPORTIONS

Balanced, practical and designed for the needs of the home in its specific region.

CLUES THAT REVEAL ORIGINS

CERAMICS



Maker's marks and styles can point to a town, workshop or region.

TEXTILES



Weaves, patterns and monograms often reflect local traditions.

HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS



Many everyday items were made for very specific regional purposes.

TIMBER & DETAILS



Timber type, carving styles and hardware can identify regional traits.

FRANCE: A LAND OF DIVERSE REGIONS

From Brittany to Provence, Alsace to the Pyrenees, each region has its own materials, traditions and craftsmanship.



KNOWLEDGE TURNS OBJECTS INTO STORIES

The more you learn about regions, the more you see the history, purpose and people behind the objects you collect.

SHOULD ANTIQUE FURNITURE BE PERFECT?

P

robably not.

One of the first things a new collector has to learn is that old objects have lived lives.

THEY MAY HAVE BEEN:



USED EVERY DAY



REPAIRED



MOVED BETWEEN HOUSES



REFINISHED



ALTERED



INHERITED



NEGLECTED



RESTORED

A piece with some honest signs of age can often be considerably **more interesting** than something that has been stripped of every trace of its history.



WORN TOP

Years of use have created a soft patina, small scratches and worn edges.

OLD REPAIR

This drawer front shows a historic repair. It's solid, honest and part of the piece's story.

FINISH WEAR

The finish has thinned over time, especially on high-contact areas.

BASE WEAR

Knocks, scuffs and losses to the base are consistent with age and normal use.

*Age and use
aren't automatically
faults.
Sometimes they're
part of the charm.*

THAT DOESN'T MEAN CONDITION DOESN'T MATTER. IT DOES.



Structural problems can compromise stability and value.



Inappropriate restoration can reduce desirability.



Major losses can significantly affect value.

But age and use aren't automatically faults.
Sometimes they're part of the charm.

BUYING ANTIQUES ONLINE

Buying an antique online can seem daunting.

You can't physically handle the object.

You can't run your hand over the surface.

You can't open every drawer or inspect every joint.

So ask questions.



A GOOD SELLER SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE CLEAR INFORMATION ABOUT:

-  **DIMENSIONS**
-  **MATERIALS**
-  **CONDITION**
-  **RESTORATION**
-  **DAMAGE**
-  **PROVENANCE WHERE KNOWN**
-  **AGE OR APPROXIMATE PERIOD**
-  **PHOTOGRAPHS**
-  **ANY UNUSUAL FEATURES**



And don't be afraid to ask about something that isn't obvious from the photographs.



A reputable dealer should want you to understand what you're buying.



After all, an informed customer is a much happier customer.

ONLINE BUYING TIPS



- ✦ Study all photographs carefully – ask for more if needed.
- ✦ Check measurements and make sure the piece will fit.
- ✦ Remember that colours can vary between screens.
- ✦ Understand the return policy before you buy.
- ✦ Factor in delivery costs and packaging.
- ✦ Buy from sellers with good feedback and clear policies.

The more you ask, the better informed you'll be – and the better your experience will be.



THE MOST IMPORTANT ADVICE?

Look closely.
Don't worry if you don't know what something is.
That's half the fun.



LOOK AT THE CONSTRUCTION.



LOOK AT THE MATERIALS.



LOOK AT THE SURFACE.



LOOK AT THE HARDWARE.



LOOK UNDERNEATH.



OPEN THE DRAWERS.



TURN THINGS OVER.



LOOK FOR MARKS.



ASK QUESTIONS.



COMPARE EXAMPLES.

And most importantly,
don't be afraid to
be curious.



1 CONSTRUCTION

Look at joints, mouldings and how the piece is put together.



2 MATERIALS

Identify the timber and any veneers or inlays. Different regions use different woods.



3 SURFACE

Examine the finish, patina, wear and any signs of refinishing or original surface.



4 HARDWARE

Study the style, material and condition of handles, locks, hinges and escutcheons.

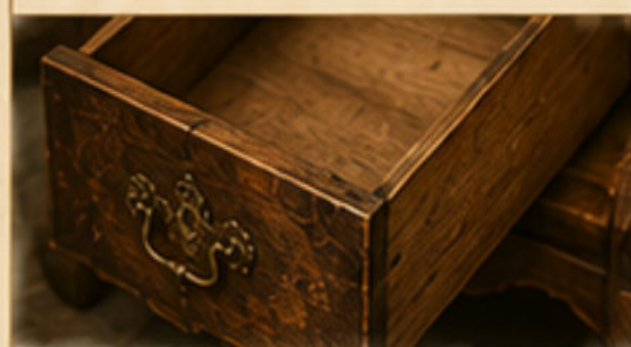


5 UNDERNEATH

Look underneath for construction details, repairs, or old labels.

6 DRAWERS

Open the drawers. Check the sides, bottoms, runners and any markings inside.



7 TURN OVER

Turn the piece over or on its side if possible. You'll often learn a great deal.



8 MARKS

Look for maker's marks, pencil marks, labels, stamps or old inventory numbers.



9 COMPARE

Compare with other examples in books, catalogues or reputable online resources.



The more objects you look at,
the more patterns you'll begin to recognise.

Eventually you'll start noticing things
that you didn't even know you were looking for.

That's when antiques become
particularly addictive.



*"Curiosity is the
collector's most
valuable tool."*

THE EVE VIEW



At European Vintage Emporium, we don't think antiques are simply objects that have survived for a long time.

We think they're little pieces of human history.

-  Someone designed them.
-  Someone made them.
-  Someone bought them.
-  Someone used them.
-  Someone cared for them.
-  Sometimes someone repaired them.

And eventually, somehow, they survived long enough to arrive here.

That's what makes old objects interesting.



**FROM THE PAST...
TO THE FUTURE**



The scratches, the wear, the slightly wonky drawer, the faded colour, the old repair – these things can be **evidence** of a life already lived.

MADE

Long ago...



USED

In daily life...



CARED FOR

Through the years...



SURVIVED

The passage of time...



APPRECIATED AGAIN

A new home, a new future.



We're not interested in pretending that every old object is rare or enormously valuable.

We're interested in finding interesting things that have survived and giving them another opportunity to be appreciated.

Because perhaps the best thing about antiques and vintage isn't looking backwards.

**It's giving something from the past
a future.**

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Thank you for supporting the stories that objects carry – and the future they still have to offer.

WHERE TO GO NEXT



he first chapter
ends here.

*The rabbit hole is
only beginning.*

If you've enjoyed this introduction,
the next step is to start looking at
the objects themselves.

COMING NEXT IN THE
EVE KNOWLEDGE LIBRARY

No. 002 — HOW TO IDENTIFY ANTIQUE FURNITURE

We'll look more closely at construction, materials,
joinery, hardware, drawers, finishes and the
physical clues that can help you understand
an old piece of furniture.



FROM THERE, WE'LL START GETTING CONSIDERABLY MORE SPECIFIC.



French furniture.



Furniture styles.



Regional traditions.



Bonnetières.



Confituriers.



Armoires.



Commodes.



Louis XV.



Louis XVI.

And eventually, we'll be getting into some wonderfully obscure corners of the European antiques world.

That's where things get really interesting.

Keep looking. Keep learning. Keep asking.

The world of antiques is deep, rewarding and endlessly fascinating.

We're just getting started.

