

18 carat yellow gold Art Nouveau enamel diamond flower pin with one Old European cut diamond .5 carats with a color and clarity of I-J/SI1 by Tiffany & Co.

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Area experts open the box to reveal the beautiful world of estate jewelry

Where All That Glitters is Old

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whether it's a pair of delicate drop earrings that graced the ears of a woman from the 1870s or a clunky garnet ring from the disco dancing era a century later, jewelry from the past brings beauty to the present day.

The umbrella term "estate" is the category for all previously-owned jewelry, including "antique" (more than 100 years old) and "vintage" (eras within the last century). Based on the runways, pages of fashion glossies, and tips from designers, these glimpses into the past are at the height of popularity today. With mystique and mystery, grace and charm, each piece tells its own historical tale combined with the new wearer's own statement of fashion know-how.

"The fashion world has seen vintage have a resurgence," says Rebecca Garnick, Marketing Director of Long's Jewelers, where estate jewelry is referred to as "previously loved." Garnick sees vintage touches everywhere, "whether it's how people are outfitting their homes or how people are dressing themselves."



1

1: Sold \$6,517.50
18ct. White Gold, Diamond, and Gem-set "Amazone" Wristwatch, Charles Oudin, Paris, pave-set diamond dial, case, and buckle with circular-cut ruby and marquise-cut sapphire highlights, enclosing a quartz movement, completed by a hand sewn textured pale green strap, 20 x 30 mm, signed.

2



2: Sold \$457,000.00
Colored Diamond and Diamond Twin-stone Ring, prong-set with a gray-blue marquise-cut diamond weighing 2.87 cts. and a light pink marquise-cut diamond weighing 2.60 cts. flanking two pear-shape diamonds, shoulders set with diamond baguettes, platinum mount, size 6 1/2.



3

3: Sold \$474.00
Pair of 18ct. Gold, Coral, and Emerald Insect Pins, each with coral body and emerald melee eyes, lg. 1 5/8 in.

4: Sold \$148,125.00
Antique Alexandrite and Diamond Pendant/Brooch, prong-set with a cushion-cut alexandrite measuring approx. 14.90 x 14.60 x 8.07 mm, framed by old European-cut diamonds, approx. total diamond wt. 6.20 cts., gold mount, dia, 15/16 in.

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It seems looking back means fashion forward these days. Estate jewelry's time-tested beauty outlasts trends and offers a uniqueness that battles today's mass-produced market.

"People like the charm and uniqueness of these one-of-a-kind styles," says Kurt Anderson of Wellesley's Anderson's Jewelers, who has watched their estate jewelry department grow from being a part of one case in the 1970s to four cases over the past few years, and now is one of their most popular departments. "Estate jewelry is not a mass merchandised and marketed item and that's part of the appeal of wearing these pieces."

"People like estate jewelry also because no one is telling you this is what is in," says Gloria Lieberman, Director of Fine Jewelry at Skinner in Boston, one of the nation's leading auction houses. "[Estate pieces] have staying power. Jewelry is also becoming more looked at as a serious collectible art form," she continues. With over 600 pieces in a recent Skinner auction, it's obvious that the interest for older gems and jewelry is there. Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, which just ended its "Imperishable Beauty: Art Nouveau Jewelry" exhibit, is another example, boasting the first jewelry curator appointed to any museum in the country.

Be it art or adornment, there is a common thread winding its way through all estate pieces. They're unique. Original. The jewelry has a history, known or otherwise—maybe a provenance of a famed past owner or questions of mysterious origins that let your imagination play. Who wore it before you? What life has it lived?

"There's a romance factor," says Albert DePrisco, owner of A.M. DePrisco Wellesley, which recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. "Certain pieces are very dreamy because of the stones, content, or the way they were finished. Estate jewelry has a mystique because it's not something you see everywhere.

It could even be a reminder of someone." If you discover an emerald brooch from the 1930s that looks like something your mom would have worn, the piece immediately takes on a charm of its own.

Another reason estate jewelry is so appealing is quality. "New jewelry is very exciting, very fresh," says



4

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Where All That Glitters is Old

1: Sold \$13,035.00

18ct. Gold, South Sea Cultured Pearl, and Diamond Necklace, Emis, composed of graduating pave-set diamond and plain polished links centering a white pearl measuring approx. 18.15 mm, approx. total wt. 20.00 cts., 145.6 dwt, lg. 16 in., signed with presentation sleeve.

note: Emis Beros Designs, located in the Via Testa courtyard off Worth Avenue in Palm Beach, produced custom made jewelry.

2: Sold \$9,776.00

18ct. Gold and Diamond Band, Cartier, set throughout with full-cut diamonds, approx. total wt. 5.07 cts., size 5 1/4, no. 637899, French maker's mark and guarantee stamp, signed.

3: Sold \$10,665.00

18ct. Gold and Diamond Line Bracelet, prong-set with forty full-cut diamonds, approx. total wt. 10.00 cts., lg. 7 1/4 in.

4: Sold \$3,436.50

18ct. Gold and Diamond "Rope" Band, Schlumberger, Tiffany & Co., six rows of rope, with full-cut diamond "X" motifs, size 6, signed.

5: Sold \$3,436.50

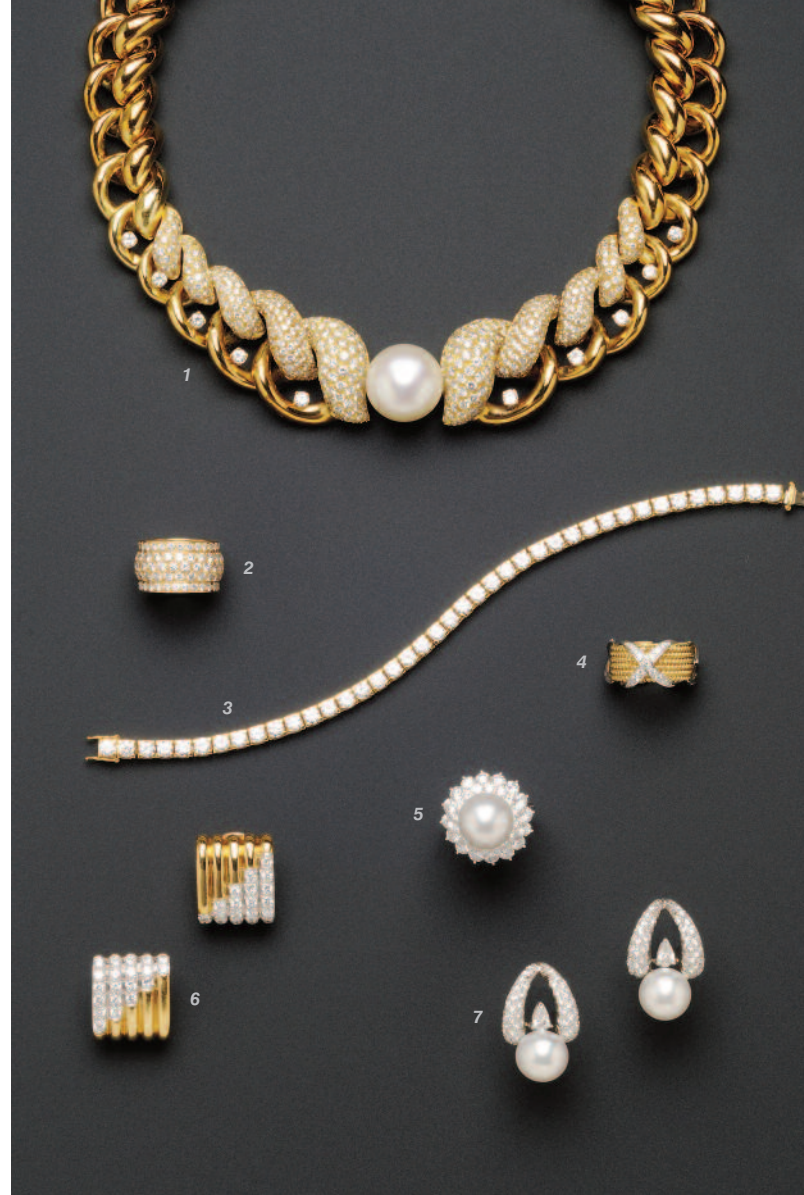
Platinum, South Sea Pearl, and Diamond Ring, set with a pearl measuring approx. 13.10 mm, framed by a double row of full-cut diamonds, approx. total wt. 4.00 cts., size 6 1/2, (ring guard).

6: Sold \$2,014.50

18ct. Gold, Platinum, and Diamond Earclips, Emis, each ridged form bead-set with lines of full-cut diamond melee, approx. total wt. 2.80 cts., 3/4 in., signed.

7: Sold \$6,043.50

18ct. White Gold, Cultured South Sea Pearl, and Diamond Earclips, Emis, designed as pave-set diamond tops set with a white pearl measuring approx. 12.40 and 12.20 mm, approx. total diamond wt. 4.06 cts., lg. 1 1/8 in., signed.



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DePrisco. "But the appeal to earlier estate jewelry is the craftsmanship from several years ago. It was exceptional and is very hard to duplicate today on some of the finer pieces. There was a certain special touch that the master had when they built a piece."

Rebecca Garnick agrees. "Antique estate jewelry was created before technology was allowed to show a lot of advances," she says, "so what you find is a lot of time-intensive, hand-crafted pieces that are finished with beautiful attributes. Even the cuts of the stones were done differently, so the way they might look in a setting is different than more modern pieces."

Sometimes these gems aren't even available in more contemporary jewelry, according to Wellesley resident David Walker, owner of Chestnut Hill's David & Co. and Shreve, Crump & Low in Chestnut Hill and Boston. "One reason I focus on estate and antique is because I love the way jewelry was made," he says. "Time was slower. Labor costs were less, relative to today. The gemstones in those pieces



above: Platinum, diamond, and ruby Art Deco bracelet.
right: Platinum diamond bow pin.



often will never be found again. People buy estate jewelry because they want to own something that no one else has, and many times at a price that is far less than [what it would be] to remake. It's not just quality, but beauty and value."

Periods for Antiques

As you move back through the decades, it becomes harder to find pieces that have survived. But that doesn't mean there aren't beautiful pieces to suit every finger, neckline, or wrist.

"Things can be rare within every period," explains Lieberman. "It depends on how many were made, how it survived, if it was signed. There are great pieces from every era." As a frequent guest expert on PBS's Emmy-nominated series *Antiques Roadshow*, Lieberman is often relaying potential value of estate pieces.

It boils down to your taste during the search. Do you want an oversized stone from the early 1950s or a delicate hummingbird brooch from the late 1800s?

"Jewelry making has changed so many times over the last 200 years, that there are different categories and different types of jewelry that appeal to some types of people that don't appeal to others," says Walker.

If you're interested in finding a piece that has touches of nature's beauty, you might want to search the older Victorian period. Beginning in 1837, Queen Victoria's 64-year reign of England was marked by her love for family and nature and led to sentimental designs with romantic opals and seed pearls, and natural origins of flowers, trees, and birds. The decorative style of the following Art Nouveau period continued the flora and fauna, but with paler colors, and made of interesting materials like horn, copper,

Period Timeline

Here is a breakdown of the most well-known eras for estate jewelry.

Georgian Period

1714-1830

Early Victorian Period

1837-1860

Mid-Victorian Period

1860-1880

Late Victorian Period

1880-1901

Art Nouveau Period

1880-1914

Edwardian Period

1901-1910

Art Deco Period

1920-1935

Retro Period (War Years)

1935-1945

Modern Period

1945-Today

Where All That Glitters is Old

ivory, and shells, integrating the sensuality of the female form.

Known to many experts as the best jewelry ever made, pieces from the Edwardian period (1901-1910) are true gems. There was a cosmopolitan flair to jewelry during this exuberant time in history. Jewelers used platinum and diamonds to create intricate and delicate filigree patterns that resembled lace. Light and airy designs were everywhere, with diamonds essential to most pieces.

Free flowing was soon replaced during the Art Deco Era, with harsh geometric and symmetrical themes taking shape. Bold color played an important role, as did new cuts in diamonds—the never-before-seen emerald, pear, and marquise. Jewelry took on an even bolder look during the Retro period (1935-1945), incorporating designs of previous periods with Hollywood flair. Silver screen starlets became “royal” trendsetters and jewelry included chunky styles, showcasing large colorful gemstones and synthetics in oversized cuts. Shortages during the Second World War led to yellow and rose gold becoming the metals of choice over platinum.

Jewelry travels from the mid-1940s to present day through the Modern period, full of flourishes of lively decorations, “cocktail” jewelry, and artistic silver creations.

Buying Estate Jewelry

Although owning estate jewelry might seem glamorous, Lieberman suggests asking yourself certain questions before making a purchase.



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“You have to be okay with buying previously-owned jewelry,” she begins. “A lot of people aren’t. How much of a connoisseur are you? Do you care if there’s a flaw? Are you into perfection?” Another consideration is whether you’re buying for adornment or future value. “You have to really examine why you are buying the jewelry. Is it something you want to own forever or would you be happy with it for a few years. That’s the difference of if it will be part of a collection you’re putting together.”

Once you’ve settled on owning estate, deal with a reputable dealer throughout your search for the perfect piece.

“Speak to someone knowledgeable about what you’re purchasing,” says Lieberman. “Ask the questions. Get the downside of what you’re interested in buying: whether there’s a flaw, if it cannot be repaired, whether it should be reset. You also need to know the upside of a

top: Platinum and diamond circle bow pin.
left: 16ct. unheated Burma sapphire and diamond retro pin c.1945.
1: 2.74ct. old European cut diamond in a square motif Edwardian ring c.1910.
2: 1.88ct. old European cut diamond Edwardian ring c.1920.
3: 4.00ct. old European cut diamond Victorian 3 stone ring c.1890.



Where All That Glitters is Old

piece: if it's signed, if it was rare when it was made, it will go up in value."

"The value of a piece comes from its style, quality of manufacture," adds Anderson, a graduate gemologist from the Gemological Institute of America. "The condition of a piece or how badly a piece is worn also enters into value. Look for any obvious repairs that may have been done on an item. For instance, many 19th century brooches had hook catches, and it's quite common to find these catches changed to safety catches. This would decrease the value of a piece."

Dents, scratches, missing parts, evidence of soldering repairs, whether the integrity of the piece is intact—these are all visible considerations that might lead to expensive and sometimes impossible refurbishing. Anderson suggests examining the piece with a jeweler's loupe for any subtle damages.

Once flaws have been detected, it's time to assess the next step. "You need to be knowledgeable of what it's going to cost and whether it can even be fixed," says Lieberman. Before every Skinner auction, they offer a jewelry clinic during which experts tell potential buyers what can and can't be done to pieces of interest (for example, changing the size or converting a piece into something else). When fixes are done correctly, it doesn't lower the value.

If you've fallen in love with a must-have piece, but there's obvious wear and tear, DePrisco says that shouldn't deter you.

"It might be better to buy the older piece, duplicate it, and hold onto the intrinsic value of the old setting," he says. "Some pieces, depending on how special they are to you, you shouldn't touch at all. If you admire it for its beauty or it has name recognition or it's a signed piece (like early Cartier), don't touch it. Leave it alone if you're interested in preserving the value."

A good relationship with a jeweler can also mean discovering your diamond in the not-so-rough sooner than you thought.

"If you're looking for an actual estate piece, there is more legwork than just 'I saw this in a magazine and I want to purchase it,'" says Garnick. "It almost is akin to someone who enjoys going to estate homes. You're going to visit a lot of homes before you find the perfect antique piece for your home. The hunt is exciting."

But one thing is for sure. If you're patient, you can make estate jewelry a special part of your life.

"The estate jewelry business will always continue," says DePrisco. "There's a constant cycle of jewelry continuing to resurface. Styles do change, but they always come back. The things they're making today will be sold, cashed out, end up in an estate, and then in 30 years will surface. Older beautiful pieces will always be in demand." **W W**

right: 5.25ct. old European cut diamond Edwardian style earrings

below: 25ct. colorless diamond flexible retro bracelet signed Oscar Heyman c. 1950-1960.



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