

LIFE STYLE

Antiques

CAVEAT EMPTOR, YOU SAY?



Although it may seem quite astonishing, a lot of individuals stand tall in their pride and passion of accumulating rare collectibles, antique if you may, and the hobby was not born yesterday. Rare antiques tell stories of the past and travel over centuries to garner collector interest.

Masterpieces have been popularised recently by famous designers and celebrities, taking inspirations from vintage merchandise in their regular works. The satisfaction of possessing a 100-year old artefact conveying its own unique tale of history is parallel to none.

Whether it's a Buddha statue postage stamp or medieval coins of silver that trigger your interest, buying your very own antique is harder than you may realise. However, a few shops in Dhaka are equipped with quite a number of rare artefacts.

New Elephant Road is one of the focal points of Dhaka city and just along the lines of the road stands an antique store, tall and proud. 'Antics' specialises in unique collectibles such as trunks, dinner-wagons and vintage coins, a few dating as far back as the Mughal era.

Online stores are yet another option. Although online shops specialising in genuine antiques are difficult to find, you can always be on the lookout for a post on social media groups wanting to sell a vintage collectible. Such posts can be easily found and the owners easily contacted.



Now that we have the stores sorted out, going 'treasure hunting' is still difficult. Standing tall in your way is the price tag ranging high from Tk 25,000 for simple crystal bowls and decanters to even Tk 30 lakh for engraved furniture dating back to the onset of British rule in Dhaka.

But if you are a keen collector and you hail from a 'zamindar' or aristocratic family, getting your hands on these vintage collectibles is much simpler. In that case, you might just inherit antique pieces of the past as family heirlooms and add a sense of warmth and history to your decor.

If you are not dead-set on buying an antique, you can always visit one of the

many places, displaying historic artefacts. Exhibits showcasing collectibles like, Persian and silk rugs, 100-year old lamps, chandeliers and coins, among all other finery are regularly held at different locations in Dhaka. One was held in Pabna in 2013. Another popular place for antique connoisseurs is the Lalbagh Fort in Pura Dhaka. Valuable Mughal relics, old paintings and portraits of emperors, jewellery, vases and 'Kasha' plates of dynasties from the 17th century are put on display at



temporary exhibitions organised here.

When talking about antiques, how does one forget the spectacular accumulation

of the National Museum of Bangladesh? Housing some of the best and most ancient works, this museum is home to contemporary art, metal and wooden sculptures, gold and silver coins and has one of the largest collections of vintage firearms; some dating as far back as the 12th century. Just pay a visit and you are sure to walk out the doors enriched by knowledge and history.

However, deciding if an antique is worth its salt is a whole other story. Advancement of technology and modernisation have made antiquing incredibly easy. The experts and keen enthusiasts among us need no guide, but there are some tell-tale signs you could be on the lookout for. Ancient artefacts do not survive the passage of time without a few cracks and dings along the way and these are what will help you recognise valuable antiques. Look for chips, scratches, discoloration and even the texture of the glass or style of writing of the inscriptions.

Pay attention to finer details and try to watch out for legitimate signs of age. Ask the vendor if the age-old artefact is 'mint condition.' If so, expect the object to be a perfect piece with no flaws. If it is 'excel-

lent condition,' expect a minor lacking like a pinhead flake in a porcelain vase.

Lastly, 'good condition' implies your vintage piece has suffered and conquered a few slings and arrows along its travel through time but has been expertly repaired nonetheless.

Collecting antiques is a global trend and the hobby extends beyond the borders of Dhaka. Reaching far out to international markets in London, America and Paris; flea markets, national museums and even yard sales in these foreign lands offer display trinkets, vintage fabrics and movie posters, record collections and Monkees lunchboxes.

Whether a masterpiece is preserved in a household as an heirloom, in a museum on display, or in the possession of a passionate enthusiast, vintage collectibles travel through time without a time-machine. They evoke stories of survival, and being the proud owner of your own stash of antiques is truly incomparable.

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Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

If you are looking for good antiques, try Antics, 93 New Elephant Road, 8618187.