

GARAGE SALES

Buying Collectible Ceramics

American art history is rife with collectible pottery.

According to *Collectors Weekly*, American art pottery started in the 1870s, gaining momentum steadily through the 20th century. Makers to look for include Rookwood, Roseville, Frankoma and Weller, all founded in the Midwest during the 1880s and 1890s.

The first pieces were made from local materials and were simple, utilitarian pieces. Eventually, these makers grew into larger operations, making more decorative pieces. As the movement grew, other makers were started, including labels such as Arequipa Pottery, Batchelder, Bauer, Catalina Clay, Grueby Faience, Fulper, Vivika, Hull, Chelsea Ceramic, Lonhuda, Malibu, Newcomb College, George Ohr and Beatrice Wood.

IDENTIFYING AMERICAN ART POTTERY

Pieces from the American art pottery movement are marked, usually on the bottom, with the maker's unique markings. The Marks Project is a website that provides a catalog of those marks from 1946



© ADOBE STOCK

to present. It can help the casual shopper identify pieces they find for sale. You can also submit marks you find in the wild.

Marks may include the color of the clay and the way the piece was fired, says *The Cajun Collection*, which also maintains a list of American pottery marks and a resource directory. That site says not all pottery

can be identified using marks. It recommends using other characteristics such as weight (American pieces tend to be heavy), clay color, the shape of the foot or base, glazes and other characteristics.

ESTABLISHING A COLLECTION

Starting a collection might be as simple as snatching up a

piece that catches your eye at a garage sale or inheriting a piece from a loved one. The first thing you should do when you decide to collect is to set a goal. It could be a certain maker, a glaze type or even a type of piece (think pitchers or vases). It could be as simple as whatever catches your eye or that you're matching a color palette in a room.

Familiarize yourself with the characteristics of the pieces you want to collect and know what they usually go for. As you peruse sales, keep an eye out for pieces with those characteristics, bearing in mind that, as *The Cajun Collection* says, it may not be properly marked. Decide how much you have room for; if you have room to safely store pieces you're unsure about but get a good deal on, do it. There are no rules here. Do what fits your lifestyle, budget and tastes.

LOOKING AT OTHER COLLECTIONS

Several museums and collections have websites showcasing their American pottery collections that can give you an idea of what's out there. The Smithsonian Institution has an extensive collection online, down to where you can find each piece to see it in real life. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has a collection and a book from 2018 that catalogs it.

Remember that many pieces in this movement aren't unique. American art pottery by some makers was mass-produced. The Hull brown drip collection is an excellent example and is widely available at garage sales and flea markets around the country.

GARAGE SALES



© ADOBE STOCK

Buying Collectible Ceramics

American art history is rife with collectible pottery.

According to *Collectors Weekly*, American art pottery started in the 1870s, gaining momentum steadily through the 20th century. Makers to look for include Rookwood, Roseville, Frankoma and Weller, all founded in the Midwest during the 1880s and 1890s.

The first pieces were made from local materials and were simple, utilitarian pieces. Eventually, these makers grew into larger operations, making more decorative pieces. As the movement grew, other makers

were started, including labels such as Arequipa Pottery, Batchelder, Bauer, Catalina Clay, Grueby Faience, Fulper, Vivika, Hull, Chelsea Ceramic, Lonhuda, Malibu, Newcomb College, George Ohr and Beatrice Wood.

IDENTIFYING AMERICAN ART POTTERY

Pieces from the American art pottery movement are marked, usually on the bottom, with the maker's unique markings. The Marks Project is a website that provides a catalog of those marks from 1946 to present. It can help the casual shopper identify pieces they find for sale. You can also submit marks you find in the wild.

Marks may include the color

of the clay and the way the piece was fired, says The Cajun Collection, which also maintains a list of American pottery marks and a resource directory. That site says not all pottery can be identified using marks. It recommends using other characteristics such as weight (American pieces tend to be heavy), clay color, the shape of the foot or base, glazes and other characteristics.

ESTABLISHING A COLLECTION

Starting a collection might be as simple as snatching up a piece that catches your eye at a garage sale or inheriting a piece from a loved one. The first thing you should do when you decide to collect is to set a goal.

It could be a certain maker, a glaze type or even a type of piece (think pitchers or vases). It could be as simple as whatever catches your eye or that you're matching a color palette in a room.

Familiarize yourself with the characteristics of the pieces you want to collect and know what they usually go for. As you peruse sales, keep an eye out for pieces with those characteristics, bearing in mind that, as The Cajun Collection says, it may not be properly marked. Decide how much you have room for; if you have room to safely store pieces you're unsure about but get a good deal on, do it. There are no rules here. Do what fits your lifestyle, budget and tastes.

LOOKING AT OTHER COLLECTIONS

Several museums and collections have websites showcasing their American pottery collections that can give you an idea of what's out there. The Smithsonian Institution has an extensive collection online, down to where you can find each piece to see it in real life. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has a collection and a book from 2018 that catalogs it.

Remember that many pieces in this movement aren't unique. American art pottery by some makers was mass-produced. The Hull brown drip collection is an excellent example and is widely available at garage sales and flea markets around the country.

SELLER'S TIP

Pricing

If you have collectible pottery among your sale items, check online to properly identify it and make sure it's priced correctly. Don't necessarily look to make a mint here; pieces from that Hull collection can go for just a few dollars.

AD SPACE