

GARAGE SALES

Buying Art at Garage Sales

While chances of pulling out a Rembrandt at a garage sale are slim, it's never zero.

A priest found an Anthony van Dyck painting in an English antique shop. He paid about \$500 for it. It's valued at more than \$600,000. In Indiana, a lucky shopper found Martin Johnson Heade paintings worth more than \$1 million. And, in Ohio, a thrift store Picasso poster turned out to be the real thing, worth more than \$7,000.

SPOTTING REPRODUCTIONS

Art Source International says that while reproductions are getting harder to spot as mass printing technology improves, there are several factors to consider when looking at artwork of unknown origin. Coloring is one big giveaway. Reproductions are often made with halftone colors, meaning patterns of small dots. These dots can easily be spotted with a magnifying glass. You can also look for plate marks signifying a work was printed with a metal plate, copyright and other notices, and slick, modern paper.



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BUYING THE ART FOR THE FRAME

Another reason to hit the garage sales for artwork is to repurpose the frame. Frames that catch your eye can be used for your own artwork, to

frame kids' works of genius, or strung with wire for snapshots, jewelry and more. You can also paint the frames and use them in a gallery grouping on a brightly hued wall. There are as many possibili-

ties as there are frames.

OTHER ARTWORK

Keep an eye out for artwork that's not a painting. Sculptures, ceramics, glasswork, fiber arts and more can

be scored at garage sales for a fraction of their cost on the open market. Remember that trends tend to be cyclical. For instance, macrame, a hit in the 1970s, is now hot again. And vintage ceramics and glassware can help make your midcentury modern showplace shine.

It might also be more than just eye candy. A Missouri woman bought a Buddhist sculpture at a garage sale for less than \$100. Artnet says the woman later took it on "Antiques Roadshow," where experts identified it as a Tang Dynasty sculpture. It later sold at Sotheby's New York for \$2.1 million.

JEWELRY

Also look out for jewelry made by distinctive artists. In 2005, Artspace reports, Norma Ifill was shopping at a Philadelphia flea market when she bought a \$15 necklace. Years later, she went to an Alexander Calder exhibit at the Philadelphia Art Museum and noticed similarities between the artist's work and her necklace. The Calder Foundation later verified her piece was the real thing and had even been displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in 1943. The necklace was auctioned for \$267,750 at Christie's.

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LOOK FOR JEWELRY BY DISTINCTIVE ARTISTS

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BUYER'S TIP

Valuable Item? Have An Expert Look at It

While the shoppers in this story were lucky, they first and foremost went for the piece because they liked it. Secondly, they had the work professionally appraised by experts before it sold for thousands or even millions of dollars at a reputable auction house. If you pick up what you suspect is a collectible or valuable item, have it evaluated by experts, who can advise you on the best course of action to take.

AD SPACE