

ANTIQUE SHOPS & DESIGNERS®

BRINGING THE WORLD OF INTERIOR DESIGN INTO YOUR HOME





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LARGE VS. SMALL

BY GEOFFREY WESTERGAARD

In the world of antique objects the matter of size and cost is worth contemplating.

Often when shopping and considering antiques to buy for a home, a client may wish to know why a small piece is more expensive than a large one. Like everything else it is a simple matter of supply and demand.

Until fairly recently in history many people experienced regular disruptions in their lives as war was their constant companion. The main consequence of leaving hurriedly meant only small objects could be easily transported. Anything large or complicated to disassemble had to be abandoned and often never regained. Pieces that were wonderfully made using expensive material always possessed a tremendous value irrespective of their diminutive size.

In a household, silver, pewter, paintings, tapestries, and small pieces of furniture held more value than large beds, cases or cupboards, as they could be packed quickly and easily carried away.

When a safe destination was reached, these possessions could be unpacked and a new household set up. Since wood was so readily abundant it was a simple matter to use available timber in the new location to construct large pieces needed for storage and sleeping.

As the world grew relatively more peaceful, settling in one place seemed a safe choice, and as more houses were built, the more furniture was required. In small interiors pieces, that could perform several functions were extremely desirable.

In larger spaces these pieces were used along with larger, stationary items such as display cabinets, bookcases, and armoires, chosen not only for their function but also because they signaled the wealth enjoyed by the owners.

Charming tables, chairs, and small chests filled small cottages, while the grander houses provided the space for appropriately larger grander sized pieces.

This ratio remains true today. There are more interior spaces of modest size than opulent ones in Europe as well as the United States. Everyone desires artful, smaller pieces wherever they reside. The demand for beautiful and luxurious small items of furniture has only increased as the number of people in the world has grown along with the economic ability to purchase these pieces. The intrinsic value of an antique does not diminish. Only so many of these covetable items were created in the past and the best examples still retain an allure that is non-existent in a new or reproduction piece. Larger items of furniture do tend to fluctuate more in cost as tastes change and the amount of available wall space increases and decreases. Because the demand for a gorgeous side table or an elegant cabinet increases, the prices steadily increase with every passing year.

Antiques truly do embody the concept of custodianship. While we live with them in our homes they bring tremendous enjoyment and satisfaction. As we pass on they remain behind to bring pleasure to the next generation. ❖

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