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Ormolu

Think that your gilded antique piece isn't worth its weight in gold? Think again. If the gold finish is ormolu, then you still have a very valuable item.

Used primarily in the 17th and 18th and well into the 19th century as a furniture, decoration or mounting finishing, ormolu is a finish used on bronze to imitate gold. It was produced widely in England during this time and was also used in France, but the use of it died out in the 19th century. In fact, the word *ormolu* is a derivative of the French word *moulu* which signifies gold, and is also referred to as "mercury gilded."



Ormolu finished table

Because gold was so expensive and hard to use in thin coats, gilders had to create a formula of their own for gilding.



Ormolu candelabra

Every gilder came up with a type of formula all their own, but ormolu was the most successful and popular. It was composed of a mixture of copper and gold powder, with as much as 90% copper and 10% gold powder in some compositions. This would then be turned into a thick paste.



Jewelry box by Matson

This paste was easier to control and apply, almost like paint, to the brass fixtures and sculptures. It could be applied with a wire brush, and wouldn't waste much of the gold. Ormolu finishing was also very successful because of the low temperatures which gilders used to create their work. These low temperatures would not harm the brass sculpture or hardware beneath it. Unlike its sister, brass, ormolu more closely imitates gold because of its reddish finish. This reddish hue comes from its copper content which is left behind in a fine film after the "firing" process.



1900 French clock ormolu

Eventually, creating pieces finished in ormolu were banned because the process to create them was so dangerous. The actual "mercury gilding" process would burn away the copper and only leave the gold behind, but the fumes created from this process were toxic, and many craftsmen died from its production.



Ormolu wall lights

Ormolu finish can be found on nearly everything from chandeliers to porcelain items, mantle clocks, vases and other decorative household items. Louise the XI snuff boxes, black moor mounts, jardiniers, Because of its limited use on beautiful antique pieces, ormolu finished items are fairly highly valued.



Louis XV Jardinier

Though not nearly as valuable as heavily gilded ornamentation, ormolu was a staple in finer household items for nearly two centuries. Most ormolu pieces have beautifully withstood the test of time with proper treatment. Ormolu jewelry is truly non-existent and would have been considered to be "costume" jewelry.



Louis XV style clock

Often, a furniture or objets d'art can hold more value depending on the maker. Names like Thom ire, Osmond, Vulliamy, Boulton, Picard, Watt, Cressent and Camus are among some of the more popular makers of ormolu items.



Regency style ormolu wall sconce



Regency desk set



Regency period parfumiere candlesticks



Regency period candlesticks



Regency leather and ormolu jewelry case

Though the French and the English held a monopoly on the ormolu market, there are a great number of Chinese porcelains that were gilded in ormolu.



1730's Chinese bowl

Ormolu gilding can be found in literally any style from Louise XV to early Art Nouveau, Renaissance revival and Rococo.



Rococo ormolu chess table, 1800's



Rococo style ormolu
candlesticks, 1860



Rococo style 19th century
mirror

There are very few antiques appraisers and authenticators that work with and know the LEVI works, Directories, or anything from the Charles X period. However, there is a strong market for these objects which appear often. At Florida Antiques Appraisers, we have a full knowledge of every era and maker of ormolu and can assist you in any ormolu appraisal that you may require.



Charles X period chandelier, 1820



Charles X ormolu and opaline



Charles X object d'art



Charles X mantle clock



Charles X burl mahogany commode

Think that you may have an ormolu finished item? It may be hard to tell because of it's similarity to other gold finishes. Only an expert can tell for sure.



Louis XV style chandelier

We research, authenticate and **appraise** all items with an ormolu finish.



Ormolu vanity perfume tray



Ormolu urn



Ormolu portico mantle clock



Ormolu gilded bird cage, 1880



Ormolu Aphrodite inkwell



Napoleon III ormolu gilded couch



Louis XV marquetry inlaid ladies
escritoireh



Ormolu French heart shaped box



Ormolu empire figurine



Egyptian revival ornate mahogany buffet



Cut glass ormolu base decanter, 18th century



1850's ormolu frame



White marble astronomy clock by Vulliamy



Turquoise opaline cup and saucer, 1830



Ormolu Russina dancer, 1820's



Ormolu circular dish, 1880



Ormolu beveled mirror, 1880's



Ormolu and green tortoiseshell
clock, 1760



Ormolu and black marble match striker



Louis XVI vase



Ink stand, 1880



Griffin candlesticks, 1880



Glass vase centerpiece, 1890



French tripleheaded inkwell



French ormolu ewer with angel



French ormolu hand mirror



English lapis and ormolu watch holders



Cabinet with ormolu trim



19th century French porcelain centerpiece

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