



## Collect Value Divest: The Savvy Appraiser

**Elizabeth Stewart**

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*Stewart's guide to collecting is entertaining and informative, making it ideal for anyone who wants to understand the objects that surround them.*

In *Collect Value Divest: The Savvy Appraiser*, Elizabeth Stewart shares some of the valuable tips she's learned during her thirty-year career as an appraiser of fine art and antiques, guiding anyone from a garage-sale picker to a serious collector and teaching all to determine what's a keeper and what can be tossed.

At some point, most people have wondered whether their various family heirlooms—Dad's cast-iron truck? Mom's treasured porcelain vase?—are worth anything, or whether the painting of a California beach scene found at the local Goodwill is an original. Where does one turn for the information that can unlock the mysteries of a "treasure"?

Stewart divides her book into chapters focused on paintings, nostalgia, books, artifacts, and the unusual. A final section is chock full of information on collecting strategies and trending collectibles, and there's even a humorous piece on how to determine whether someone is a bona fide collector or just a hoarder.

Sprinkled throughout the book are anecdotes gathered from Stewart's years of collecting and appraising. Some are very helpful, and most are downright fascinating. Others seem to serve mainly to demonstrate the expertise of the author, such as several pages covering classic "very, very rare" Mayan artifacts. It's highly unlikely that the average collector will ever encounter one of these artifacts, and while the story of the five-hundred-pound carved-stone jaguar head is intriguing, the pages are questionably relevant within the book. Additional information dedicated to the slim jewelry section would have been more useful.

Various tips on how to distinguish a valuable print from an inexpensive reproduction are very helpful, and it's fascinating to discover what Stewart thinks are the next hot collectibles. Information on what's definitely not ever going to be worth anything is also valuable, as is the section on the dilemmas many baby boomers face in their quests to downsize. One of the most useful segments explains where to find great deals. Stewart shares why, in our current economy, it may be a good time to visit your local Goodwill and watch for estate sale signs.

A chapter covering books does not explain how to determine whether a book is a first edition. Dealing mainly with antique manuscripts, it misses the opportunity to clarify basic information for general collectors.

Impeccably organized and edited, and thoughtful in its presentation, Stewart's guide to collecting is also an informative and entertaining read that will benefit and enhance anyone's quest to buy, sell, or simply understand the objects they live with.

DIANE PROKOP (March 29, 2017)

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