Old decorative office accessories still work for today’s home offices

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Whether you work at home or at a business, items once made long ago as desk items are still useful and decorative. Collectors have rediscovered the humble paper clip, blotters and letter openers as not only decorative but functional. We still use paper clips, don’t we? Depending on their age, material and who made them, they can be bargains or luxury items costing more than $1,000. An early gold paper clip made by Tiffany can sell for more than $500.

For research.

Tiffany used relatively new inventions, materials, sizes and functions. Many of Tiffany’s early 20th century desk accessories are still available. They were not mass produced. These desk sets were made in small lots. Pieces were sold separately and there were no specific sets. Later there were sets in 20 styles and a variety of decorative motifs. At the time Tiffany used relatively inexpensive materials such as sheets of etched bronze and pre-cut glass. However, he also used gold for such humble items as paper clips and letter openers.

The Grapevine pattern was the most popular and still is with today’s collectors. It features a curling vine, trellis and fruit. The emerald green slag glass background highlights the raised bronze design. It was made from 1899 until the 1920s. It was in keeping with the then popularity of Japanese stencil designs and Louis Tiffany’s personal motto that “Mother Nature is the best designer.” The pattern is the rarest and most expensive.

A bronze pen wiper, made by Tiffany used to catch excess ink was made in the Zodiac pattern. It represents the 12 signs of the Zodiac. An example is currently offered on eBay for more than $400.

From 1906 to 1938, the Arts and Crafts designs became popular. Their desk accessories were primarily in copper and brass.

Bakelite was also a newly used material, in use around 1910. Desk accessories came in colors as well as clear.

Desk sets in Art Deco designs used marble and bronze. They can cost $2,000 in a retail setting. Top designers of the era created them.

Big changes were made during the eras of Mid-Century Modern. Not only were there new objects but the use of colorful plastic. An example is a desk organizer with several compartments and “stackable.”

CLUES: Consider a single category, such as inkwells. They were made in a variety of materials. You might not recognize an old paper clip made of metal and decorated with a figural item, such as a horse head. Do research. There are treasures to be discovered.

**Quote of the Week**

The home is the chief school of human virtues.
William Ellery Channing