

examples most sought-after today—have a remarkably proto-modern look that works particularly well in contemporary interiors. According to London dealer Alexia Amato, who specializes in opaline and has helped to build one of the world's best private collections for a British aficionado, there has been

#### Where to Find It

**Alexia Amato Antiques,**  
Antiquarius, 131 Kings Road,  
London, 011-44-207-352-3666.

**Susan Dean, Antiques and  
Uncommon Treasure,** 760-744-  
0873; [www.antiquesuncommon  
treasure.com](http://www.antiquesuncommon<br/>treasure.com).

**James Robinson, Inc.,** 480 Park  
Ave., New York; 212-752-6166.

**James II Galleries, Ltd.,** 11 East  
57 St., New York; 212-355-7040.

#### Further reading

*Les Opalines*, by Christine  
Vincendeau (Les Éditions de  
l'amateur, 1998). The French-  
language bible on the subject.

increasing interest in the glass among Americans over the past few years. Although one school of taste runs toward severely simple boxes which look terrific gathered together in a tabletop mosaic, another favors showstopping egg-shaped boxes displayed in a staggering variety of mounts, from ormolu birds' nests and faux-rustic wheelbarrows to vine-covered tripods. For a fine Louis Philippe period opaline box, you can expect to pay anywhere from the high hundreds to the low thousands of dollars, depending on the rarity of color and the elaborateness of the fittings.

Among the qualities to look for in opaline boxes are substantial weight—the heavier the better—as early 20th-century reproductions of 1840s designs tend to be much lighter than the originals. The gilt-metal mountings are also giveaways to actual age, with more finely hand-detailed hardware a prime indicator of value. And as always with reproductions, it's inevitable that contemporary influences creep in even when a historical style is being copied,



*Rose opalescent  
domed cave à odeur, c. 1815–1830.*

so a would-be 1840s piece can have a telltale 1940s feel to it.

Above all, says Alexia Amato, “Color is the most important factor in determining rarity and value. Blue and white are always the most popular, but yellow and pink are very rare and expensive. When you hold white opaline up to the light, there should be a fiery red color if it’s the real thing. With colored pieces, 20th-century examples tend to be less deeply hued and may be almost translucent, especially the blues.” ■