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ANTIQUES

Ageless Beauty

This Second Empire mirror is the fairest of them all

WHAT IT IS:

A circa-1880 ebonized wood and gilt octagonal mirror in the Second Empire style.

WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT:

In surprisingly pristine condition, the mirror "never ended up in a barn or attic and has always been exquisitely cared for," says Drut, adding that the piece has also never been repainted or restained. "It's an exceptional work of art."

WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL:

"In no other period in the history of decorative arts have designers been able to achieve a new style while borrowing so much from previous eras," Drut says of the mirror, which still has its original glass. "Lièvre was widely considered to be the best artisan of the time, especially with furniture, which explains the frame's beautiful craftsmanship."

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PROVENANCE:

Designed by the French decorative arts master Édouard Lièvre (1829–86), the mirror had been in private hands before Benoist Drut, the owner of Manhattan's Maison Gerard gallery, negotiated to purchase it for use in his own home several years ago. "It has been hanging in my bedroom for a long time and one of the first things I see when getting out of bed," Drut reports, "but I recently decided to offer it for sale."

DETAILS:

\$120,000 (50½" h. x 30½" w. x 4" d.), Maison Gerard, 43 E. 10th St., NYC, 212-674-7611, maisongerard.com. —DAVID MASELLO