KOVELS® Antiques & Collecting
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PHOTO CREDIT: Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates

PHOTO CAPTION: This Bohemian glass piece is cut to show off its clear, colored and opaque layers and finished with enamel and gilt in a dramatic display of decorating skill.

Bohemian Glass

There are numerous ways to decorate glassware, and 19th-century Bohemian glass artists excelled in all of them. They often used multiple types of decoration on the same piece. For example, a small glass beaker or tumbler that sold for $75 at an auction by Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates fits multiple layers, cut panels, colorful enamel, and gilding into its 3 3/4-inch frame. It is attributed to Harrach, a glasswork founded in the 18th century and still operating today as Harrachov in what is now the Czech Republic.



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Harrach experienced its golden age, when it won medals at world exhibitions and made glass for royal courts, in the mid-1800s, about the time this beaker was made. It is an exquisite example of Bohemian glassmaking. Opaque white, bright red, and clear glass are layered together. Cut panels ensure the color of each layer is visible. Raised opaque white panels embellished with enamel flowers alternate with panels cut to clear glass in a classic strawberry diamond pattern. Since there is no such thing as too much decoration in 19th-century glass, the red ground is covered with gilt scrolling leaves.

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Q: I inherited two porcelain lamps shaped like Victorian ladies with curly hair and very fancy lace trim on their caps, collars, and sleeves. Can you tell me what they are? I don't see any markings on them. The bottom has felt-like material. If I peel it off, would there be a mark or year on the base or porcelain?

A: Electric lamps with bases shaped like human figures were popular in the mid-20th century. Many ceramics companies at the time produced lamps with figural bases, but occasionally, older porcelain figurines were repurposed as lamp bases. There are, of course, many porcelain companies that made figurines in Victorian dress, but the lace trim sounds characteristic of Dresden porcelain.

Dresden porcelain refers to pieces made in Dresden, Germany, since the early 1700s. Blanks were purchased from other porcelain factories and decorated in Dresden. Their famous lacy trim was made by dipping real lace in thin porcelain slip. Some pieces have a mark that includes the word "Dresden," but many are unmarked. Dresden-style figurines have been produced in other countries as well; for example, there are "Irish Dresden" pieces, which were made from the 1960s to the 2000s. They are marked "Made in Ireland."

You may want to contact an antique dealer or lamp repair specialist in your area to determine if your lamps were converted from earlier figurines. If they are, it may be worth removing the bottom to look for a mark.

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TIP: Don't use ammonia on glasses with gold or silver decorations.

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CURRENT PRICES

Box, playing cards, hinged lid, rectangular, wood, porcelain plaque, oval, painted, King of Spades, gilt brass frame, Continental, c. 1900, 2 x 3 1/2 inches, $160.

Toy, train set, Marklin, locomotive, tender, three cars, track, bridge, key wind, c. 1910, 31 inches, $300.

Lamp, two-light, electric, dome shade, leaded glass panels, caramel slag, red quatrefoil flower border, patinated metal base, square stepped foot, 19 x 15 inches, $1,090.

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