



TRAVEL

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MY HOUSTON

Aaron Rambo's design shop, FOUND, is an apt name, for he has found his home in Houston. He takes us on a tour of his favorite destinations.

I grew up in a small town in west Texas, but I have lived in the big city of Houston for fifteen years. I can't imagine having my brick-and-mortar store, FOUND, that I established with my business partner, Ruth Davis, as well and my own related design business, anywhere else in the country. Houston has a thriving art scene and, sometimes, it seems as if everyone living here is passionate about interior design and decor.

Designers fly in regularly from all over the country to Houston to scour the city's many design and antiques shops, which I think are some of the best to be found anywhere. Whether a designer or a collector is after fine eighteenth- or nineteenth-century antiques or the best examples of midcentury Modern, Houston proves repeatedly to be one of America's best sources.

For the past ten years, I've lived in a renovated nineteenth-century warehouse on the edge of our now bustling downtown. My space is where I play with ideas, inspired by the sheer age of my building and the progressive art scene that is just outside my front door.

I have my regular destinations — not only for the interior design work I do, but also places in which I meet some of my good friends, all of whom are creative and inspiring.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MEGAN LOVOI

PRODUCED AND WRITTEN BY AARON RAMBO



William Gardner, LTD



Tienda X Gallery



Kay O'Toole Antiques



Joyce Horn Antiques



Carol Piper Rugs



Back Row Home

Of all the sources for antiques in Houston, W. Gardner remains my “must-see” shop. I stop by as often as possible to see Bill, its namesake owner and my friend, not only to look through the latest finds from his travels to Europe, but also for a good dose of his dry sense of humor. His pieces have as much personality as he.

Another regular design stop for me is Garrett Hunter and Michael Landrum’s Tienda X Gallery, with its edgy and expertly curated stock of rare twentieth-century prototypes mixed with fine antiques from all eras. The duo display their wares in ways that are evocative of art gallery shows.

Kay O’Toole marches to the beat of her own drum, for everything she carries in her shop (and fabulous home just steps away) is special in some way. Nothing she chooses is middle-of-the-road. And yet, nothing is taken too seriously. Her sense of style and styling is always effortlessly chic. Think vintage taxidermy mixed with Baccarat chandeliers.

Joyce Horn Antiques is a must-stop when establishing a foundation for a room. From her travels, Joyce ships in several containers a year, and before she can even unload them, designers line up to grab what they can. Her enormous showroom space is always styled beautifully and the staff is some of the friendliest and most knowledgeable in the business.

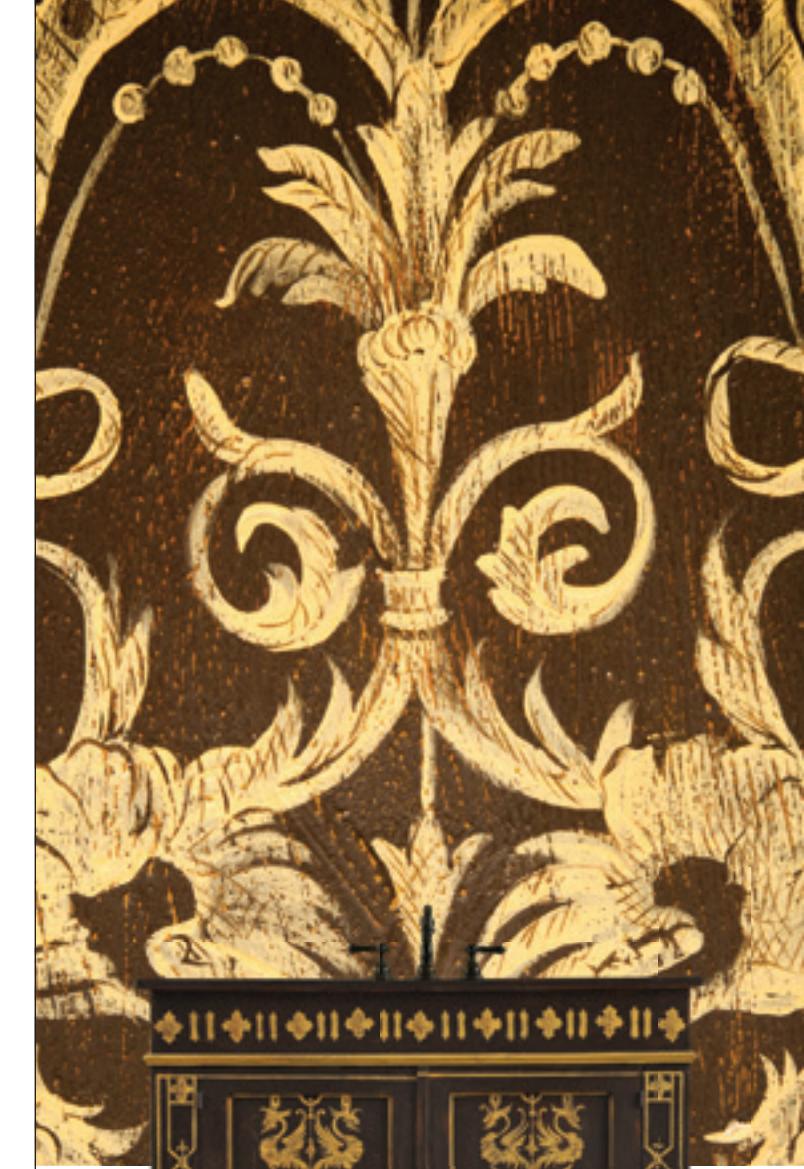
You’ll never want to keep any floor bare after visiting Carol Piper Rugs. Long known for its inventory of superb antique rugs from around the world, Carol Piper is also known for its own custom line of rugs. She and her business partner, Ryan Reitmeyer, continue to redefine the industry through their innovative patterns, and their inventory of vintage fabrics used to upholster furniture and pillows as well as their weaving techniques and materials.

Whenever I want to introduce instant personality into a room, I always find something at Back Row Home. They bring in multiple containers a year and every piece selected is worthwhile. I especially love their vintage faux bois in every shape and size and their collection of vintage hotel silver.

In keeping with their reputation for always being on the cutting-edge, Lam Bespoke continues to broaden its

TRAVEL





inventory of custom upholstery choices, lighting, accessories, and tables. I consider it the best place for upholstery, as well as a source for custom pillows and all the smart finishing touches needed to make a room memorable.

A rose is never just a rose when florist David Brown gets hold of one — or any bloom. He consistently brings in the highest quality and rarest flowers from around the world and sculpts them into arrangements you wish could last forever.

Matt Camron Rugs has been a staple on the Houston design scene for years, noted for its well-rounded stock of antique rugs and the best custom flatweaves, some of the most versatile that can be used in homes.

Jardin de France, a garden and antiques shop, has been a secret source of mine ever since I happened upon it — and now the secret is out. Great vintage garden pieces fill a small courtyard, though I think they really shine in the light of the store's interior. The first floor is stacked with choice French antiques, vintage paintings, and charming accessories, while the upstairs houses Courtney Barton's Mela & Roam, a sensational source for antique vintage textiles and furniture, and all sorts of curios.

(continued on page 183)

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(My Houston, continued from page 49)

There isn't a single design project I've done that doesn't include something from Area. Owner Don Connelly selects fabulous (and chic) antiques from throughout Europe, while store manager, Daniel Cuellar, sources the best in new accessories, furnishings, and lighting.

I met my friend and artist, Paul Carola, when I saw his hand-cut, stenciled works to which he applies paint with a palette knife. I've continued admiring his works at The Silos artists' studios. Situated in the old Success Rice buildings, the studios are home to some of Houston's most progressive and original artists. I love discovering new talent there and I use the place as a source for artisan-created items that figure into my projects.

Benjy's, the first of Benjy Levit's

growing restaurant empire, is a Houston institution. Having worked as the designer on all of his restaurants, I consider the recent overhaul of the original restaurant, in celebration of its twentieth anniversary, as one of my favorite revamps. The menu is consistently innovative, but because I'm a creature of some habit, I always order the cheeseburger. It goes unmatched in town.

At its Houston outpost, Stag stocks the best in classic American menswear. Many of the clothes are decidedly utilitarian in feel, but defined and refined with great detail and materials. The items are arrayed on turn-of-the-century shop counters with vintage factory lights that add to the rugged atmosphere.

As a great lover of art books, I know

of no better source than the Menil Bookstore in the namesake museum, itself one of Houston's most distinctive destinations. The trick is to not go in without having time to spend there. It's nearly impossible to leave without design tomes under your arms.

Certain gallery owners immediately recognize new artists, as well as the value of more established ones. Kathy Dimmitt of Dimmitt Contemporary Art is exactly that kind of gallerist. She also has a talent for her one-on-one customer service and ability to help you find a piece of original art that is perfectly suited to a space.

In a city that never stops expanding, I know that I'll keep finding new shopping and dining discoveries. A person never tires of Houston. ■

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