

# HOMEFRONT

Period Style Furniture



ABOVE: Seated, Andrea Zemel. Standing, Adam Brown

**A**dam Brown and Andrea Zemel, owners of Iliad Antik, New York, Los Angeles, and Prague are dedicated to showcasing the inherent modernity of the Biedermeier style. The gallery imports only pieces from the “high” era of Austro-Hungarian Biedermeier, from 1815 to 1830. After years of collecting and showcasing Biedermeier furniture, Andrea and Adam have several recommendations about starting your own antique collection.

“Owning a fine antique is tantamount to owning a piece of history,” explains Andrea. “In a time when the means of production has changed so radically, objects and artifacts that speak to another time help us stay connected to the great accomplishments of our cultural past.”

When asked about the best places to find great antiques,

Andrea and Adam recommend looking in a region of high culture, because one is apt to find its vestiges in the form of elegant and classic antiques. Try to narrow down the pieces that interest you the most, and focus on a period or geographical area. “We specialize in Biedermeier, Empire and Neo-classical antiques from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and focus our search for these pieces in central and Eastern Europe,” notes Adam.

Each period and style of furniture has its own authenticating features. It is necessary to learn what those features entail before purchasing antique pieces. There are proportional and stylistic canons associated with every historically relevant period or style. What is encountered here in the States is less the case of forged antiques than the misclassification of a style due to lack of exposure and expertise. There is a visual signature with period furniture that informs the trained eye. When a piece is a forgery, the regularity of a newer surface is often self evident. The 90’s boom put a deep dent in the supply of quality antiques making their way into the market. As a result, it is also important to look for non-restored furniture that has been purposefully made to look old.

With Biedermeier, Adam and Andrea look at the quality and thickness of the veneer, joinery, stylistic consistencies, and substrate woods to help determine the authenticity and age of a piece. Austro-Hungarian Biedermeier are examples made in Vienna and Berlin between 1815 and 1830. Pieces were rarely signed, but some have castle inventory stamps through which provenance can be ascertained.

When deciding how to start your collection, Andrea advises to think of buying furniture “as an amalgam of need, integration of style and personal taste.” Even if you start small, start with quality. As a general rule –even with the most varied of tastes in home décor–quality always

works with quality. Be it 20th century Art Deco or 18th century Baroque, different periods have decorative "simpatico" when they are at comparable levels of craft. A great piece of antique furniture can dress up an entire room. "Antiques retain their value over time," clarifies Adam. "An item purchased can be used and appreciated for many years and brought back to the market. In most cases, these items can be sold at or above value paid."

Blending contemporary furniture with antiques is not unordinary or complicated. Adam and Andrea note that Biedermeier furniture is ideal for blending with contemporary, Asian or other period pieces because it is at once exceedingly modern in form, while it maintains a quality of elegance and age. There is little in modern and post modern design that cannot find its roots in the classical Biedermeier aesthetic.

Adam and Andrea's final piece of advice is to not overlook that old heirloom that you were given years ago that is in need of serious repair. However, it is important to have a piece restored by an expert in the restoration of the specific period and style of furniture. Methods common to one period or style may have little in common with others. Find a reputable restorer and have a consultation prior to signing a contract. A good restorer should have a photo portfolio of other pieces his firm has restored. You would be amazed at how a well restored piece could enhance your collection and appreciation for antique furniture. ■

For further information  
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1-866-935-4382

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ABOVE: A rare Empire Center hall table with magnificent carved, gilded and painted palm motif, mahogany veneer with ebonized details and gilded trim. Vienna, c. 1815-1820.



ABOVE: An unusual pair of Egyptian-influenced pyramidal faux semonier armoires in cherry veneer with ebonized detail, Austrian c. 1820. Ebonized Biedermeier side table with maple lines; bow-shaped cherry and ebonized side chair, Austrian c. 1820. Figure sculpture by Sabin Howard. Hand colored etchings by owner, Andrea Zemel.