

RUTH GAY

CHATEAU DOMINGUE

ACCESSORY FIND

18th-century French Biot Pot, price upon request; chateaudomingue.com



As a young girl growing up in Europe, Ruth Gay was immersed in European culture, developing a fond love and deep appreciation for its beauty, history and charm. "European design has always been a part of me—it's my passion," says the proprietor of Houston's Chateau Domingue. Fast forward to 1995. Gay was in the process of building her home, and intended to incorporate a variety of genuine European elements into the property. "I went to Europe in hopes of finding some great old floors, mantels and fountains. But I didn't come home with the pieces I really envisioned for the house and I had such a hard time finding them, which ultimately gave me the idea to open Chateau Domingue," she explains. Today, Gay's store is packed with one-of-a-kind architectural and monumental antiques—some dating as far back as the 15th century—and she travels to Europe bimonthly to personally hand select each and every piece she sells. "If I would love it in my own home, then it's a must-have for the store!"



What are you seeing right now that's "hot" in the world of vintage furniture?

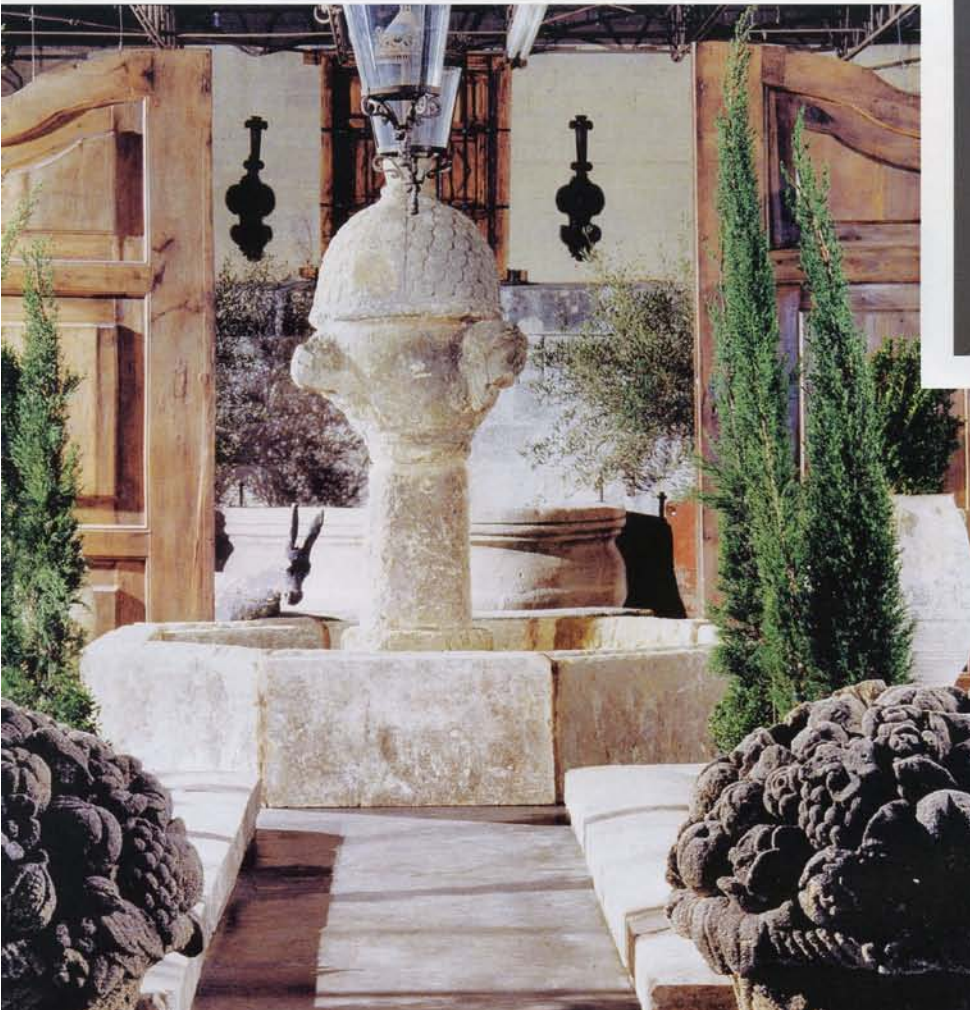
It's not necessarily a particular piece of furniture or style. It's more of the notion that people can own a piece of history. Antiques encapsulate the past and when they are placed in your home, you get the pleasure of enjoying them every day.

What is your current antique obsession?

Stone. There's something about the texture, patina and warmth that it radiates. A lot of people think stone is a very masculine material, but I feel just the opposite. It embraces femininity simply because of its beauty. Personally, I love limestone because it's a softer stone, which allows for the years of wear to show through.

What's your most recent best find?

I came across a load of flooring this past summer. When I first discovered it, I was not quite sure what it was because I had never seen anything like it before. Turns out it was from Bars de St. Gilles, a village in France that had a working quarry during the 17th century. It was so rare and special that I had to have it.



What defines your style?

I'm all about authenticity. I try to envision how a piece may have originally existed, where it lived, the purpose it served and what it would look like if it were still in its original form. This allows me to take an antique and repurpose it.

What is your own home like?

My house, which is always a work in progress, is like something that you would find in the French countryside. I strive to make it feel like an authentic bastide with old 18th-century floors, these great stone steps that are hundreds of years old and an old monastery stone sink and counter in the kitchen.

Which item in your own home would you never part with?

A 19th-century painting I have of a young girl walking in the field with turkeys at her feet. The painting sets the tone for my whole house and gives me a feeling of calmness and serenity.