

# Old Dog, New Tricks

Local antique experts discuss modern trends in an old-fashioned industry.

BY KELCY WILBURN PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHERYL GERBER

New Orleans has an expansive antique scene, extending from decades old, established French Quarter dealers to the more recent shops along Magazine Street to the warehouses and flea markets that dot the city's perimeter. The ways that shoppers can browse and purchase antiques are almost as diverse as the scene itself. As times change, does antiquing also?

"The world of antiques is still the same," says Gerrie Bremermann, owner of **Bremermann Designs**. "It is the world that's changing." A longtime veteran of the New Orleans interior design and antique scene, Bremermann has extensive experience in the industry and has seen decades of change.

"I began my interior design career in 1972 and my antique shop in '82. I have been fortunate in collecting a grand clientele in New Orleans and across the country from Montecito, Calif., to Palm Beach, Fla.," says Bremermann, who specializes in 18th- and 19th-century French antiques. Bremermann also enjoys decorating with a mix of more modern pieces, from Lucite tables to contemporary art.

"The modern world is getting more modern. Social media and technology have made home furnishings more available to the consumer," says Bremermann. "The modern world buys furniture. The antique world collects for life."

Bremermann enjoys helping young clients begin collections, advising them to go slowly and collect the best quality they can afford. When planning for new interior design, she recommends putting one good piece of art or a quality antique into the budget. "Remember," she says, "you're



M.S. Rau Antiques



Rivers Spencer Interiors

shopping for life."

A recent personal trend for Bremermann has involved lightening up serious rooms and collections with cleaner, contemporary fabrics and rugs. "All in all, I love it both ways," she says.

Rivers Spencer, owner of **Rivers Spencer Interiors**, is one of the younger designers in the area. She has taken to social media as a way to build her business and has seen its benefits as a way to reach new clients.

"Facebook in particular has generated a lot of interest in my store and design services. I'm meeting friends of friends here and elsewhere that would've never heard of me before," says Spencer, whose Magazine Street store, despite being on the

bustling corridor, is somewhat tucked away from other antique and design stores. Spencer is also taking advantage of Instagram and Twitter to share news of arrivals, artwork and accent pieces.

"Being a young person starting in this business, I have found that social media is a major influence with my generation – people in their 20s, 30s and even 40s and 50s are using it in most aspects of their lives. You're at a loss if you're not capturing that audience," says Spencer.

Spencer enjoys purchasing antiques and vintage accents with her generation in mind. Her approach is typically to decorate with a mix of soft upholstered and vintage or antique pieces while sprinkling in the modern,