

MARY LIES OF MERCATO ITALIAN ANTIQUES AND ARTIFACTS

BRINGING
ITALY
HOME

STORY BY CLAIRE M. CATERER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON DAILEY



I MAGINE USING A 1910 MILANESE ICEBOX AS A MINI PANTRY. OR LOCKING YOUR SECRETS IN A 19TH-CENTURY DESK THAT ONCE SAT IN A TUSCAN TRAIN STATION. MARY LIES, PROPRIETOR OF MERCATO ITALIAN ANTIQUES AND ARTIFACTS IN DE SOTO, CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN. SIMPLY PUT, LIES SAYS, "WE GO TO ITALY. WE FIND GREAT THINGS. WE BRING THEM HOME."

The Italian word *mercato* translates to "market," and that's what Mary has created in her wide, high-ceilinged space that mimics a warehouse with gray-washed walls and wood floors. She began the business in 2003 because Italian antiques were so scarce in the United States, and today Mercato showcases pieces that Mary imports from Italy herself.

"You could find English antiques, you could find French antiques," she says. "There wasn't anyone specializing in Italian antiques and that is what I liked."

Mary, 47, fell in love with the country of her ancestors when she spent a college year abroad in Florence. These days, she travels a couple of times a year to Italy, bases herself in Florence and hunts down unique items mostly from Tuscany and the surrounding area.

Longtime customer Carrie Brous is amazed that such an unusual resource sits in downtown De Soto. "She should be in New York City or LA. But I'm glad she's not, because it keeps her prices so reasonable."

Mary Lies, proprietor of Mercato Italian Antiques and Artifacts.



sunflowerpub.com

SHAWNEE MAGAZINE

36

M E R C A T O
ITALIAN ANTIQUES & ARTIFACTS

33071 W. 83RD ST. DE SOTO | (913) 583-1511
WWW.MERCATOANTIQUES.COM
10 A.M.-4 P.M. WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY OR BY APPOINTMENT



A TOUCH OF WHIMSY

THE BUON RICORDO PLATES ARE ONE OF MERCATO'S MORE AMUSING ITEMS. BUON RICORDO, WHICH MEANS "GOOD MEMORY," IS A UNION OF ITALIAN RESTAURANTS FORMED IN 1964. EACH CERAMIC PLATE COMMEMORATES A PARTICULAR RESTAURANT'S HOUSE SPECIALTY AND LOCATION. MERCATO HAS COLLECTED DOZENS OF DESIGNS FROM ALL OVER ITALY. THEIR COLORFUL, HAND-PAINTED IMAGES MAKE THEM A COVETED COLLECTOR'S ITEM.



In addition to artistic pieces and architectural salvage, Mercato specializes in seating, tables, religious objects, lighting and ceramics. Almost all are antique; the rest evoke some part of Italy that touches Mary's heart. Her newest project is a line of tableware she's having made that echoes designs from 15th-century ceramics. The pieces will be hand thrown and hand painted, a Mercato original that links to the past.

Some enthusiasts deal in elaborate baroque or rococo objects, but Mary's taste tends to the classic lines of functional pieces. An 18th-century Tuscan dining table hints at big celebrations.

"I'm always curious about a piece," she says. "How many people sat down to this table to have a great meal?" That's the kind of information she brings home with her finds, which is part of her value as a direct importer.

Jill Phillips likens Mercato to a museum and Mary to a curator. "Every time you go there it's a different experience. She knows the story behind every piece."



Such stories evoke the Italian lifestyle that Mary adores. "Italians are the best," she says. "They really value time with their friends and families. They live with things that are important to them. They live with family heirlooms."

Mary and her family echo that spirit, opening the store to various events and hosting large dinners in their own home. Mercato's clients want to bring that way of life into their own living rooms.

"A lot of customers come if they really want and value unique things," Mary says. "Something different, something authentic, well made, that has character."

But it's more than that. Once you've experienced Italy, according to Mary, you want to hold on to it. "If you can just have a beautiful piece from that place that captures a wonderful moment in time spent in Italy, that's what people want and love." SM

sunflowerpub.com

SHAWNEE MAGAZINE

39

Did you know...

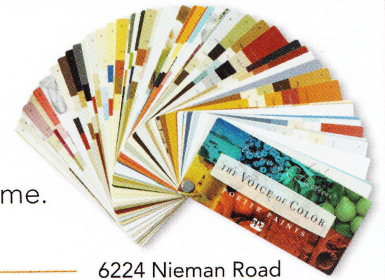
- ★ Three Shawnee Mission high schools included on Newsweek's list of 'America's Best High Schools.'
- ★ Students in the class of 2011 received scholarship offers totaling more than \$54 million.
- ★ Twenty-seven Shawnee Mission students were named finalists in the 2011 National Merit Scholarship Program, and 273 were recognized as Advanced Placement Scholars.

SMSD Shawnee Mission School District

www.smsd.org (check us out!) Give us a ring 913.993.6200 Locate us...

What's Your Inspiration?

PPG PORTER PAINTS® can custom match paint colors to help you create the perfect environment for every room in your home.



PPG
PORTER® PAINTS

6224 Nieman Road
Shawnee, KS 66203
913-599-2700

A GREAT MARKETING TOOL FOR YOUR BUSINESS

to advertise contact
Mary Hay

E-Mail: mhay@sunflowerpub.com
Phone: 913.631.1611



SHAWNEE MAGAZINE