

# HOUR

## DETROIT

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## FINDING SALVATION

Ornate architectural remnants from the past add elegant touches to today's decor

BY LYNNE MEREDITH SCHREIBER

Architectural salvage or building material reclamation, call it what you will. No matter the term, it's all about using a piece of the past to make today a little more beautiful.

Across the country, retailers are finding there's a profit to be made from selling ornate fireplace mantels, aged wood doors, faucets, cupboards, even corbels and chimney pots. In many places, solid, detailed remnants can be bought for a fraction of what it would cost to reproduce the same quality. But for some out-of-this-world pieces, you'll pay top dollar to buy a bit of hand-carved bric-a-brac.

"Homes nowadays don't have that built-in architectural element, so they're adding it," says Theresa Schierloh, who owns two Northville galleries that sell art pieces fashioned from salvage.

The architectural salvage industry is in renewed focus because of an interest in deconstructing as opposed to demolishing old buildings, says Kurt Buss, president of the Used Building Materials Association (UBMA) in Boulder, Colo. In a market of a few hundred thousand people, Buss says a salvage store can generate \$750,000 annually from the sale of remnants. The hottest demand is for reclaimed flooring, he says.

Interest in old sinks, cupboards, doors and stained-glass windows stems, in part, from the popular shabby-chic trend in decor. Salvage also offers an affordable alternative to new brand-name home furnishings.

Furniture artisans view reclaimed objects and raw materials for new creations. "[Take] a wood door, turn it on its side, paint it and [it's] a headboard," says Melinda Uerling, executive director of Recycle Ann Arbor. "People have taken a board, attached faucets of different sizes and you've got a coat rack."

Even new houses deserve a bit of nostalgia, says **Dominick Tringali, president of Dominick Tringali Architects in Bloomfield Hills.** His firm buys pieces of buildings from England and France and incorporates them into new construction.



ABOVE: Hand Cast Zinc Facade.  
ABOVE, LEFT: Hand-carved Lion Door.

from the Buss: Portland, Ore., has the largest salvage market in the country.

Online resources for salvage and salvage information: [www.build.recycle.net](http://www.build.recycle.net) and Used Building Materials Association, [www.ubma.org](http://www.ubma.org). ■

Schreiber is a Southfield-based freelancer.

There's an unexpected side advantage to using salvage decor. It's environmentally correct because, as Buss explains, construction and demolition comprise 25-40 percent of the waste stream going to landfills. That's a benefit Tringali is embracing. "We're getting into what's called sustainable design," he says. "Instead of taking something and tearing it down, we're able to rescue it. Materials are scarce, and our landfills are getting full. The pricing is sometimes more, but if the piece is authentic, like an 1820s French fireplace, it's the talk of everything."

Of course, you have to be sure you're not buying something hot off a vandal's truck. The ethical side of salvage looms large, and the key to avoiding stolen goods is finding reputable shops. "It's been such a huge problem in Detroit, I haven't bought any architectural material in Detroit in a while," says Marisa Gaggino, owner of The Heritage Company II:

Architectural Artifacts and Antiques in Royal Oak. "I only buy from people I trust."

Dedicated salvage seekers comb the country for the perfect piece. Metro Detroit has its share of salvage outlets, but some aficionados also trek to Chicago, where many old structures have been razed in recent years. New Orleans also sparks interest in buyers who seek to mimic the French Quarter feel with the right piece of wrought iron. Serious salvagers and cross-country travelers might appreciate this tip