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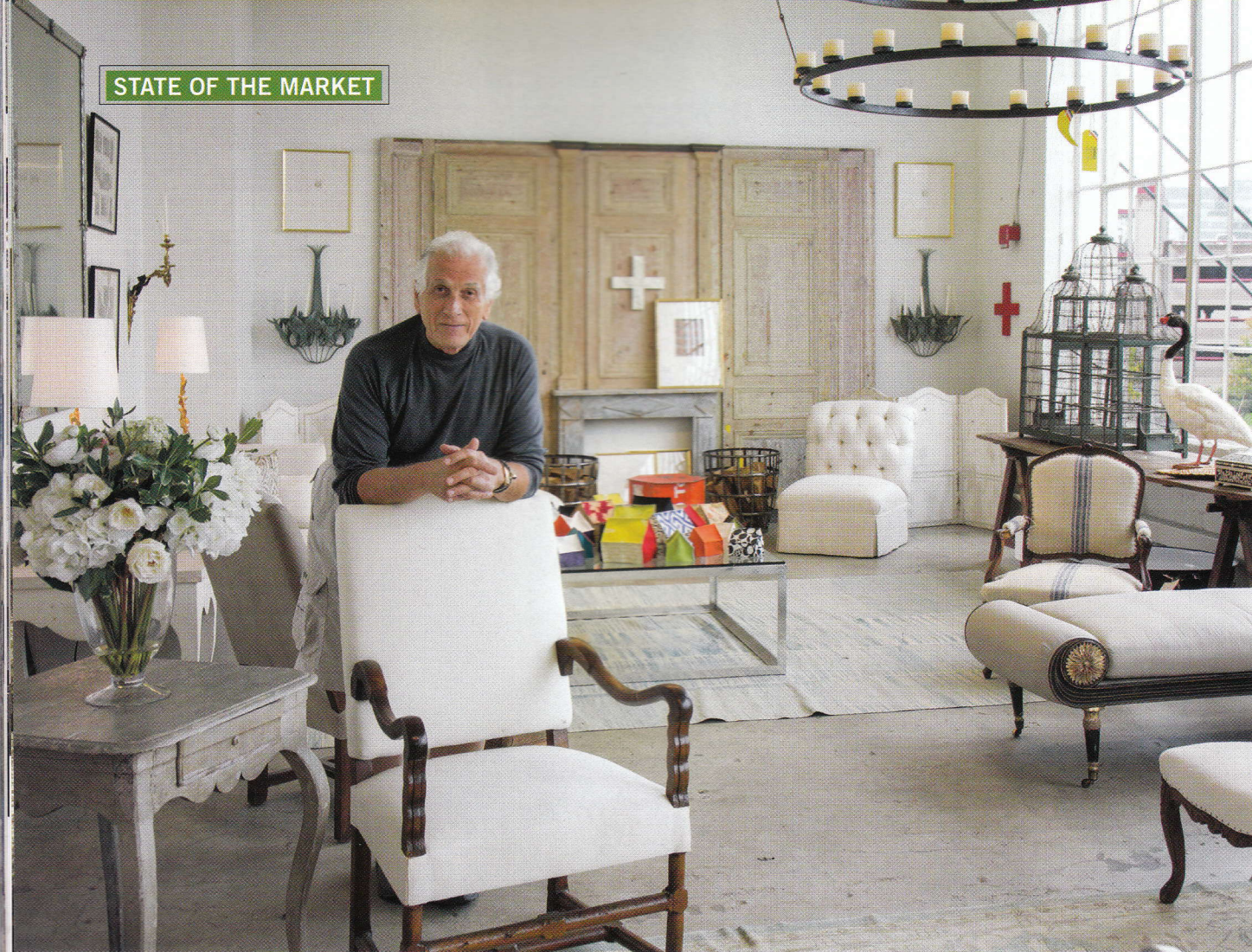
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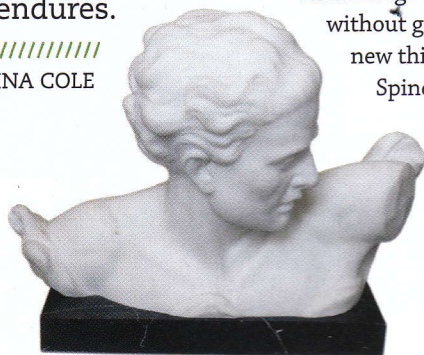
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Beauty, By Any Other Name

New England's foremost antiques dealers see changes in how and what people buy, but an appreciation for fine old things endures.

BY REGINA COLE



The world of antiques has changed so much that we may soon call them something else.

"Young people in their twenties think that the word *antiques* is pretentious," says Andrew Spindler, a long-established antiques dealer in Essex, Massachusetts.

Indeed, prognosticators have predicted the death of the antiques trade for some time. Along with books and landlines, the idea of imbuing objects with value because of their age or rarity has become, in certain circles—well—antiquated.

Youthful homeowners, we're told, want furnishings that can be tossed without guilt when the next new thing comes along.

Spindler sees the landscape shifting, not disappearing. Big changes have

ABOVE: Dealer Charles Spada in a recent pop-up location at the Boston Design Center. BELOW: This French marble bust, dating to the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century, is one of Spada's offerings on 1stdibs.com.

been wrought in taste, terminology, and technology, he says, but the search for beautiful things remains constant. "No one is doing a period room anymore," he says. "But people are actively looking for good design from different eras. It's just about what's beautiful."

"Our very concept of what constitutes an antique is changing," says Charles Spada, who heads up both a venerable Boston-based interior design practice and an antiques showroom at the Boston Design Center. The common definition of an "antique" applies to objects at least 100 years old. Thus, the midcentury modern pieces so much in vogue lately are not yet antiques in the strict sense

"Younger, design-driven people may not like the word *antique*," Andrew Spindler says "but they are drawn to beautiful things."

STATE OF THE MARKET

of the word. "To young people today, antiques date from the 1950s, '60s, and '70s," Spada says.

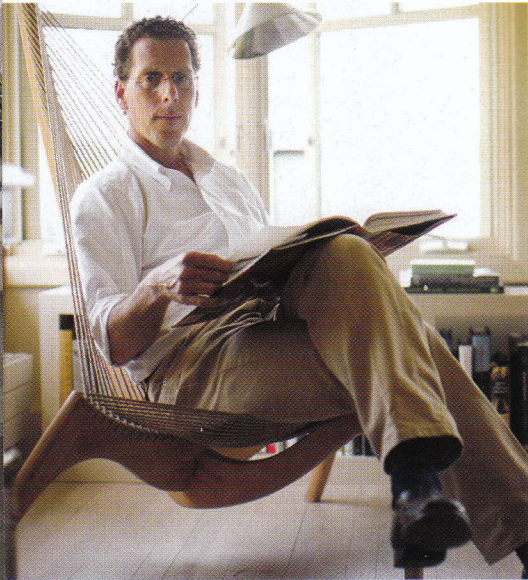
Arthur Liverant, the third generation in his family to head up Nathan Liverant and Son Antiques, in Colchester, Connecticut, says that attendance at shows is, in fact, up from recent years. "At each show dur-

ing the past year, attendance was very good," he says. But, he adds, "Our customers are busier now, with two working adults in the average household. Weekends are spent driving to Little League or gymnastics; there simply isn't time to browse the shops anymore. That's why being online and at major antiques shows is so important."

Spada and Spindler agree that a well-designed website is an essential element of their business. The two also use the services of such websites as 1stdibs.com and thehighboy.com. "Online, I reach people all over the world. The antiques business has gone global, and the way to survive is to be part of that global economy," says Spindler, who attributes 50 percent of his business to his website. "The quality of the photography has to be good. Between that and cataloguing, it makes for another

whole job."

"Online is today—let your fingers do the shopping," Spada says. "A good 40 percent of my antiques are sold online now. Still, I love having a showroom."



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FAR LEFT: Essex, Massachusetts, dealer Andrew Spindler. LEFT: One of Spindler's trademark touches is the imagination he puts into selecting and arranging disparate objects for his showroom displays. RIGHT: Arthur Liverant in his shop in Colchester, Connecticut. BELOW: Historic American pieces such as this painted sewing box attract collectors to Liverant's gallery.



Websites are an important, but not exclusive, way to do business, says Liverant. "For many of our customers, the experience of buying antiques is tactile: they like to touch, smell, feel a piece before they buy."

How people use antiques has changed as much as how they buy them. Designers use antiques more judiciously than in the past, says Spindler. "They will feature accent pieces like one great baroque or Regency chair. They don't focus on historical authenticity."

Spada agrees. "For older interior designers, antiques were the foundation," he says. "But today, it's all about the mix. I'll design a room with good contemporary furniture and with furniture of my own



design, but the spark is provided by fine antiques."

Spada also sees a renewed appreciation for fine craftsmanship. "The leaders in today's

design community know the value of incorporating good antiques into the design mix," he says. "They have come to appreciate furniture that was made by hand. If you have a Louis chair, you'll always get your money out."

Fascination with American history continues to bring collectors to Liverant's gallery. The difference, he finds, is that today's customers seek out fewer but more select things. "Today's aesthetic is more spare and minimal, so homeowners and designers use one or two special accent pieces, instead of furnishing rooms with nothing but antiques," he says.

"People want unusual, interesting, and really beautiful antique pieces," says Spada. And Spindler agrees. "Younger, design-driven people may not like the word *antique*," he says, "but they are drawn to beautiful things. Good antiques transcend the era when they were made."



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