



Encore Furnishings

DALLAS' CONSIGNMENT MARKET IS A TREASURE TROVE FOR BUYERS AND SELLERS
 BY CLAIRE CASSIDY AND AMANDA FLATTEN

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The theme is spring green in this cheery display of plates and ceramic containers. Shoppers can get finds like these at local consignment shops.

The change of seasons, with brighter sunlight and longer days, inspires creative updates to home décor. Whether redecorators seek to add new furnishings or discard old standards, Dallas' flourishing consignment market offers value and adventure.

Consignment dealers sell second-hand furniture at lower costs than new. Store owners lend showroom space to sellers in return for a commission, typically 30 percent to 50 percent of the selling price. Jenny Verastique, co-owner of Furniture Buy Design, says that as a seller, you are paying a consignment store for a service. "It takes a lot of the headaches and risks away that you have [selling items] independently," she says.

Prices of pre-owned furniture are dramatically reduced from original rates, and Dallas' upscale shops feature brand names such as Thomasville, Ethan Allen,

Henredon and Kreiss. Selective consignment stores preview furniture in person or by photo before acceptance, and many of their objects are in pristine condition.

At Consign Design Liquidation in Dallas' design district, co-owner Pat Rogers says he has a steady stream of clients including interior designers, antique dealers and homeowners. The store offers designer furniture and antiques and also has a vast selection of chandeliers. Rogers says older, American-made furniture is higher quality than a lot of today's new furniture. "I like furniture from the '50s because in my opinion, you get really good construction from that time period," he says. "At a recent furniture market, it's pretty alarming to see what comes in from China and India in the form of furniture. ... [It's] made very inexpensively. I hope that it lasts more than 10 years, but I have my doubts."

Rogers adds that American-made furniture from the '50s and '70s is substantial. "It's already had a shelf life of 50 years, and it will still be around for another 50," he says.

Consignment shops are a great option for sellers when it's not cost-effective to have an onsite sale, such as a garage sale or estate sale. Buyers can find quality items for less than wholesale price, and many of the pieces are almost new, according to Rogers.

Recent finds at a few local consignment shops include a colorful, curvy Cantoni sofa in new condition, a stately Queen Anne dining set from Baker and a trio of French country counter stools listed for \$290. And if a piece shows a few blemishes? Side tables can be revived with a coat of whitewash; armchairs can be slipcovered in cotton for the fashionable "urban cottage" look.

OUT WITH THE OLD

Executives who relocate to a far-flung city or relatives who inherit furniture from a great-aunt should evaluate what they want to keep and then consign

OPPOSITE: *Dulce, an upscale, Uptown consignment shop, features antique and contemporary furniture, and artwork from local artists.*

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ABOVE: *This swivel leather chair and ottoman by B&B Italia can be found at Dulce.*



LEFT: *Special items, such as this unique game table, can be found at Unique Consignment in Frisco.*

RESOURCES

CHANGING PLACES

Dal-Rich Village
101 South Coit
Richardson, TX
214.570.0077
www.changingplaces.net

CONSIGN DESIGN LIQUIDATION

1805 Market Center Blvd.
Dallas, TX
214.893.9514

CONSIGNMENT COLLECTION

12300 Inwood Rd. #116A
Dallas, TX
972.788.4444
www.consignment-collection.com

CONSIGNMENT HEAVEN

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214.823.4100
www.consignmentheaven.com

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1904 Skillman St.
Dallas, TX
214.827.8022
www.consignmentsolution.com

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www.dallasconsign.com

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www.mydulce.com

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www.uniqueconsignment.net

the rest, advises Jorge Fernandez, partner at Dulce, which carries antique, retro and contemporary furniture, as well as artwork from local artists. "A lot of our customers have a family, and when their kids grow up and move out, they sell their big house and move into a high-rise in the metropolitan area," he says. "Sometimes they change all their furniture, so they use consigners when moving from a big house to a small apartment or condo."

Verastique says that because her store, which has two Metroplex locations, has been in business since 1996 and has a loyal customer base, items are seen by hundreds of people per month. "Exposure is the key to selling anything," she says. "We have a targeted audience. We have a place to sell and a place for buyers to come when they need something for their home. We bear all the responsibility by taking checks and credit cards, which sellers aren't able to do from their homes."

Sellers get the fastest sales and highest prices from a store that matches their needs. Prospective sellers should perform a little sleuthing by visiting stores and observing the clientele and settings. "Look at the quality and caliber of what the store sells," Verastique says. "You want to be in good company."

Sellers also should consider how long a consignment shop has been in business and the size of the facility. When consigning a valuable piece, ask if the store has a fire alarm and sprinklers.

Verastique also advises sellers to beware of hidden fees in the consignment. "The consignment shop needs to explain in detail any fees associated with the consignment," she says.

Many shops are including clauses in their contracts stating that if the item doesn't sell after a certain amount of time, then it becomes the property of the store, and the seller won't get it back, according to Verastique. "Carefully read the agreement," she warns.

IN WITH THE NEW

Most stores let shoppers put an item on hold or preview it in their homes for 24 hours to see if it accommodates a design plan. Some stores even offer layaway. Savvy shoppers are familiar with current furniture prices and quality furniture construction: solid-wood frames, down-filled cushions, spring coils, screws vs. nails, etc. Reliable contacts in the upholstery or refinishing trades help when a piece with "good bones" needs refurbishing. "When you are looking at a chest of drawers, look for thick ply board with wooden glides and screws. Also look for antique dove tailing," Rogers says. "You start noticing quality pretty quickly."

Popular consignment stores are busy gathering pieces for their repeat shoppers, but inventory constantly changes. Fernandez says you shouldn't wait to buy a piece you want because it might not be there when you come back.

Rogers agrees. "We don't stock inventory and don't have multiple items, so what you see, that's it," he says. "Once it's gone, it's gone."

When you act fast, items found at a consignment store can offer a unique element of design to your home. "A one-of-a-kind item makes your space more personal and says something about you," Rogers says.

Verastique says many of her customers don't want the same old catalog look in their homes. "Our customers want a unique environment for their home, and they want different types of specialty pieces," she says.

For both shoppers and sellers, the business of furniture consignment is a win-win situation.

FROM THE PROS

SELLERS...

- Know the value of your furniture and have a sale price in mind. Research consignment stores to find out which have a loyal clientele and reliable track record and which ones feature the styles and brands you are selling.
- Understand the terms and agreements of the selling contract. Have a plan to communicate once a month with the shop.
- Make sure the store will take good care of your item. Do they have security and sprinkler systems? If your furniture gets damaged, will your household insurance cover the loss?

BUYERS...

- Stick to your budget and research over the Internet or phone to narrow store choices.
- If you see something you love, grab it. Some shoppers wait for the price to be reduced, and then the item is gone forever.