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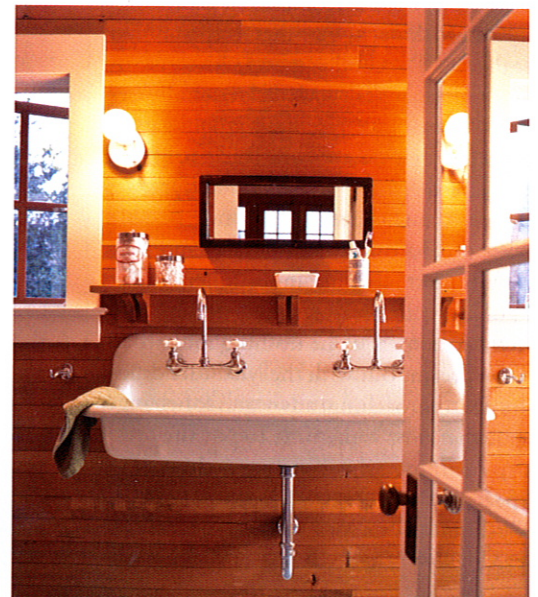
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SECOND TIME'S A CHARM

SEATTLE'S SALVAGE RETAILERS HELP YOU BRING HISTORY HOME **BY BRANGIEN DAVIS**

DO YOU SPEAK WABI-SABI? Though it may sound like the latest round of hipster lexicon, wabi-sabi is more a lifestyle than a language. Like feng shui, wabi-sabi is an ancient Japanese discipline—but this one doesn't require you to rearrange all your furniture. All wabi-sabi asks is that you celebrate the beauty in things well-worn, flawed and downright decrepit. ¶ The age-old philosophy is perfectly in sync with Seattle's 21st-century emphasis on re-using, recycling and being green and three local businesses are prime practitioners. Earthwise (in SoDo), Second Use (in South Park), and The ReStore (in Ballard and Bellingham) are all salvage retailers—which means they quite literally make recycling their business. "Salvage materials are much more hip than they were even a few years ago," says Kurt Petrauskas, owner of the 10,000-square-foot Earthwise compound in SoDo. "We used





Clockwise from left, browse the lampshades at The ReStore; the booths at Ballard's King's Hardware restaurant were found at Earthwise; doorplates await reuse at Second Use, as do vintage faucet handles from The ReStore



to be on the fringes of the industry, but people really are coming around to the idea of reusing products in their homes." The salvage stores' objective: meet that demand with supply.

Like a plague of thrifty locusts, salvage operations descend upon soon-to-be-demolished properties and carefully dismantle them down to the bare bones. Nearly everything's game—hinges, doorknobs, light fixtures, molding, mantels, cabinets, countertops, flooring, windows, faucets, tubs, sinks and toilets—so long as it can (and will) be used again. They do the hard work, making it easy for customers to discover treasures in the vast and vastly funky retail spaces. Preservationists at heart, salvage retailers want to help maintain the character of Seattle's old houses.

Why shop salvage? Maybe you're fixing your fixer-upper Victorian, or trying to match a piece of molding in your drafty Craftsman. Perhaps you live in a new condo and are looking for a unique decorative touch. "There is some real character in the pieces from these buildings," says Pat Finn, field manager for the Seattle ReStore, who's usually the first to see these treasures. Just as wabi-sabi purports, there's an undeniable heft embodied in pre-used materials—a uniqueness that only comes from being handled over time. Many customers prefer household items with a little history, because it lends a richness and character that can't be purchased at Pottery Barn.

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Second Use

South Park
7953 Second Ave. S
206.763.6929
seconduse.com
Open daily, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

The ReStore

Ballard
1440 NW 52nd St.
206.297.9119
re-store.org
Mon.-Sat. 9 a.m.-6 p.m.;
Sun. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Bellingham
2309 Meridian St.
360.647.5921
re-store.org
Mon.-Sat. 9 a.m.-6 p.m.;
Sun. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

"People like the history and the story behind the piece they're getting," Petrauskas says. "We can tell them, 'That came out of a Queen Anne house built in the '20s,' in the process they're learning about the history of Seattle."

Old hotels and local landmarks are particularly ripe sources for your own chunk of Seattle history. The ReStore, which with Second Use conducted the salvage operation on the Camlin Hotel in the fall of 2003, was delighted to discover 40 kitchenettes that had been walled off in 1949 and forgotten for decades. The booty included a number of Hotpoint electric stoves made in 1924, as well as painted iron kitchen cabinets (complete with ice-boxes). Think you can find anything that cool at Restoration Hardware? The Camlin salvage also rendered a bevy of solid mahogany guest-room doors still posted with fire exit maps and checkout times. Just imagine how many eyes have peered through those peepholes.

Recent historic salvage jobs have included the First Church of Christ, Scientist on Capitol Hill, where Earthwise found a congregation of turn-of-the-century pews; the First United Methodist Church in downtown Seattle, where the ReStore crew found slate chalkboards in the Sunday-school classrooms. Petrauskas' favorite recent find was a 16-foot-long, multicolored glass skylight that had been hidden for decades in the walls of downtown's seedy Commodore Hotel.




Above, uncover treasures such as this chandelier at Earthwise; right, an old tub from Second Use finds an elegant new home

In the seven years he's been salvaging goodies for The ReStore, Finn's favorite projects include Garfield and Roosevelt high schools. Remnants from schools are always popular—bleacher boards can be remilled and used for flooring; banks of lockers help tidy up any garage.

In fact, something about salvaged items seems to inspire creativity. When the material doesn't meet its intended function, innovative shoppers simply find another way to make use of it. For example, Petrauskas once sold an artist 100 old-fashioned horseshoe nails—he used them to hang his photos in a gallery exhibit. "Your imagination is your only limit," Petrauskas says. The Earthwise Web site is filled with customer photos of creative reworkings of old materials: a bed frame made out of antique stairway railings; skeleton keys made into earrings.

An active sense of humor seems to come part and parcel with salvage. Earthwise harbors the "Museum of Antiquities," a tall cabinet featuring bizarre items found in vacant houses, including a giant dried puffer fish and a rubber-band ball of alarming proportions. Second Use spruces up their collection of historic urinals from the World's Fair by planting decorative cabbages in the bowls. At The ReStore, employees liven up the "Lavatory Lounge" by bestowing names on the bathroom fixtures with a dry-erase marker. There's something endearing about seeing toilets lined up in a row: Lefty, Pancho and Mr. Clean—all ready to please.

While almost anything goes at the salvage stores, there are limits to what they'll welcome. "No hollow core doors," says Petrauskas, adding, "People won't even take them from our free pile." Particleboard shelves and cabinets are also non grata.

But for the most part, the salvage shops approach their work with an open-door policy, knowing there's likely someone out there who's looking for that one special thing. And with hundreds of new items piling into the stores each day, your odds of finding it are pretty good. Ready... set... wabi-sabi! 

Additional reporting by Kate Palmen



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