



HOUSEWERKS: PHOTOS BY KATHERINE FREY — THE WASHINGTON POST

Housewerks, in an 1885 Victorian building that once served as a gas pump house, below, is filled with quaint — and quirky — salvaged home furnishings.

Varied Treasures



Tracey Clark owns Housewerks in Baltimore with Ben Riddleberger.

The Old, the Odd and Other Stuff Worth Saving

By JONATHAN M. BLOCK
Special to *The Washington Post*

In an area distinguished by plenty of old buildings as well as new construction replacing teardowns, Washington has no shortage of architectural salvage stores. Two relative newcomers in the field are trying to differentiate themselves from the pack.

Looking for unusual or, frankly, weird furnishings for your home? Baltimore's Housewerks should be on your itinerary. Want to make your next renovation project an environmentally friendly one? Head over to Community Forklift in Edmonston, just over the District line in Prince George's County.



Housewerks

Salvage fans who value a store's setting as much as the wares it sells would likely enjoy shopping at Housewerks, the name an homage to the early 20th-century Wiener Werkstatte (Vienna Workshop), whose members designed buildings, furniture and even dinnerware.

Owners Ben Riddleberger and Tracey Clark opened Housewerks in February 2005 in an 1885 Victorian building that previously

served as a Baltimore Gas and Electric gas pump house. They have taken the architectural gem and restored it, providing an appropriate showcase for their decorative mantels, stained glass, ironwork and plumbing.

Housewerks "is one of the only businesses I've been in that sells old house parts that's actually in a historic building," Riddleberger said. Clark added, "We've heard it called an 'industrial cathedral' and I think that is very appropriate. We're very proud of this building, and we think it's an important reflection of what we do."



BY LINDA DAUESON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Vintage knobs and door hardware are popular items at Community Forklift in Edmonston.

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Architectural Salvage Stores Rescue Treasures From the Trash Bin

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What may be Housewerks' strength, though, is its eclectic — some might say eccentric — items, which, on a recent visit, included a blue 1950s soap box derby racer (\$695), a 1940s perm machine with rusty hair clips (\$595), and a giant circus sideshow poster advertising the "Hammer of Death" (\$2,200) hanging from a rafter.

They once sold an early 20th-century embalming table. "It was a great conversation piece," Riddleberger said. The customer who bought it is using it as a kitchen island.

Other out-of-the-ordinary finds include a pair of 1940s film projectors that were used by the Baltimore Museum of Art (\$2,500) and the backs of several pinball machines from the 1930s to '50s (\$75 to \$85). A confessional booth rented by Baltimore film director John Waters also recently sold.

"We like ecclesiastical stuff, whether it's a confessional or church pews or canvases," Riddleberger said.

Housewerks' more standard architectural antique fare includes stained glass (\$125 to \$1,200), stained-glass jewels (\$5 each), doorknobs (\$12.50 to \$18) and wooden mantels (\$265 to \$1,000). An interesting collection of early 20th-century light-fixture designs (\$85 to \$125) are quite detailed and can be framed easily.

About half of the items in the store's



Sinks of many shapes and designs at Community Forklift.

collection have been found at demolition and renovation sites, including D.C. locations in Northwest, Capitol Hill and Chinatown. Riddleberger, who worked in architectural salvage in Chicago for eight years before opening Housewerks, travels to the Midwest several times a year. Trips to Europe have yielded a few foreign items for the store.

"We enjoy getting it right from a building because that's the aspect of saving, or else it goes into the dumpster," Clark said.

Community Forklift

Community Forklift might be best considered an environmentalist's salvage store. Items for sale run the gamut from light fixtures to lumber and doors to dishwashers, most of which were destined for the landfill.

Residential deconstruction jobs — the



COMMUNITY FORKLIFT PHOTOS BY LINDA DAVIDSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Ruthie Mundell, an employee at Community Forklift, shows off an impressive collection of salvaged radiators.

process of removing materials from a building that can later be reused — provide a steady supply stream for the non-profit business. Salvaged and surplus materials from homeowners and contractors round out what's on the shelves.

The store, a 34,000-square-foot warehouse, opened in November in a defunct Washington Gas coal gasification plant in an area once deemed a contaminated site because of the presence of hazardous materials.

"We're very proud of the fact that it's sort of recycling that an abandoned site like this has been put back into use," President Jim Schulman said.

Strolling through the warehouse, filled with tall metal shelving and rows of varied products, feels like shopping at a "used" Home Depot. Near the entrance, large plastic bags of insulation (\$1.50 to \$2) sit atop high racks. In the appliance area you can pick up a range for as little as \$35. Another area contains stacks of used lumber ranging from 2-by-4s to 2-by-12s (20 cents to 99 cents per linear foot). Recycled doors and windows are in the back. Paints and stains can be had for \$2 a quart or \$5 a gallon.

On the decorative end, the store has a nice selection of old radiators (\$45 to \$175) and mantels (\$45 to \$195), as well as lighting fixtures (\$17.50 and up) and cabinets (\$40 and up).

Community Forklift also has begun to sell a range of environmentally friendly



President Jim Schulman, right, and Billy Williams of Community Forklift help Charles Freeman, left, cart a pallet of bricks to his U-Haul.

building supplies produced by Nature Neutral, a Charlottesville company that sells "environmentally preferable products" including paints, stains, sealers and flooring.

Housewerks, 1415 Bayard St., Baltimore. Tuesday through Saturday, 10

a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. 410-685-8047, www.housewerksalvage.com.

Community Forklift, 4671 Tanglewood Dr., Edmonston. Wednesday, noon to 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. 301-985-5180, www.communityforklift.com.



BY KATHERINE FREY — THE WASHINGTON POST

Hand molds and religious figures are among the inventory at Housewerks.