

insider tip

All-white furniture continues to gain favour with designers. It's timeless, elegant, and fits in with any surroundings. And if a chair is beyond your budget, a simple all-white table will do



elements

Spread the cheer



Functionality aside, quilts can also make the perfect design accessory. Bright prints and fabrics – whether silk or cotton, pieced or plain – will add texture, style and interest to your living space



- 1** Orange, green and yellow cotton quilt, Dh750 from Marina
Acid green and turquoise satin quilt, Dh750 from Marina
Pink, turquoise and green stripe quilt, Dh1,190 from Zara Home
Green satin quilt, Dh699 from The One
Red velvet motif quilt, Dh649 from The One
Gold sequin satin quilt, Dh1,190 from Zara Home

- 2** White wicker chair, stylist's own
Pink baby quilt, Dh790 from Zara Home
Children's red and blue patch quilt, Dh790 from Zara Home

- 3** Wrought iron seat, stylist's own
Coloured velvet stripe quilt, Dh995 from The One
Black satin spiral stitch quilt, Dh817 from Indigo
Gold satin spiral quilt, Dh817 from Indigo
Silk Mezzo quilt, Dh850 from Hollands and Burton at Home

Stylist: Karen Bullock
 Callaghan Walsh / The National

cult shop Urban Chateau, San Francisco

Treasures that show the tincture of time

In the spare, minimalist lobby and soaring atrium of the Galleria at San Francisco Design Center, you experience the cutting-edge architecture of the current era. But when you enter Urban Chateau on the third floor, you step way back in time. The six intimate rooms in this high-end antique store feature French and Italian gilded, lacquered and painted pieces from the 17th to 19th centuries. Certain pieces transport you to Europe and to a long-gone mindset.

Take, for instance, a Venetian bed, circa 1830, US\$17,500 (Dh64,280). Painted in sienna, brown, red and blue, the cartouche-shaped headboard features neo-Pompeian motifs, including griffins and frolicking putti. Nearby, five 19th-century violins from Budapest hang on a wall (US\$6,250 for the set).

"What we like about antiques is the handmade feel and that there's a past. With the pieces we have, you see the tincture of time," says Terry Gross, who opened the shop in 2001. The bed is in good condition but

the finish is somewhat worn. Meanwhile, the violins are for decoration only. Although Urban Chateau does some restoration, Gross prefers to leave the antiques as purchased. "I'm a purist," she explains. In her view, chipped gilt adds texture and character, creating warmth.

For centuries, whenever a French king came to power, a new furniture style was disseminated throughout Europe and the world. Gross chooses pieces that reflect the style, character and aesthetic of the period. She carries a pair of Louis XV consoles with typically ornate and curvaceous cabriole legs (\$12,500), as well as a Louis XVI *petite demi-lune* console with characteristically straight legs, also at \$12,500.

Newsworthy developments also influenced the look of pieces. In the scrolled legs of a Régence gilt wood console (\$60,000), circa 1730, you'll find women in feathered headdresses. These reflect French ideas about how Native Americans looked, as well as excitement about exploration

of the New World. Later, in 1798, Napoleon invaded Egypt. Soon afterwards, an Austrian craftsman made a mahogany Empire chest (\$32,500), which features ebonised female caryatids with squarish, King Tut-type headdresses; lion's paws serve as its feet.

Working with an assortment of trusted contacts in France, Austria and Belgium, Gross visits Europe three times a year. Feeling as if she's "on a treasure hunt", she sources antiques from places where ordinary people can't go, then airships her acquisitions to San Francisco. Regardless of where she buys the pieces, she says, "We're a Parisian-style dealer", meaning that she doesn't buy antiques in the French country style.

Some of the antiques and decorative art works in her collection show an Asian influence. Gross sells an eight-panelled black lacquer coromandel Chinese screen, circa 1900 (late Qing dynasty). Made for the European market, the wooden screen (\$32,500) depicts pagodas,

courtly figures, peasants, boats and butterflies in gold and red lacquer. "It's fanciful," says Gross. "From the eighteenth century to the present, Europeans have liked the whole fantasy of the Orient."

Equipped with a doctorate in nuclear physics and 13 years of experience as a research scientist, Gross might seem an unlikely antiques dealer. But she has gained expertise by collecting European antiques for 30 years. Moreover, she has taken courses from Sotheby's. She started Urban Chateau with her daughter, Lisa Gross Erickson, and now collaborates with Kendra Boutell, the director of sales and marketing. The shop has inevitably reflected Gross's initial vision for it, she says: "When buying for Urban Chateau, I can't shift away from what I love. If I don't love it, it doesn't show up here."

• Urban Chateau, +1 415 673 8026, www.urbanchateau.com

★ Eve Kushner



Terry Gross, the owner of Urban Chateau, has gained expertise by collecting European antiques for more than thirty years. Douglas Zimmerman for The National