

The Color Issue

ECLECTIC EYE

BELOW THE SURFACE

Jennifer Dyer, of Miami Beach, turns shabby into chic with some creativity and a great refinisher BY TALI JAFFE

With a toasted cinnamon bagel in one hand, Jennifer Dyer, an interior decorator, was sitting in her Miami Beach condo and talking on her cell phone to Pepe's Refinishing in the Miami Design District about a chair she wanted to pick up. "I'd rather spend the money on fixing something up than buy a new piece that everyone else will have," she said. "I'd hate to live in a 'me-too house'—like, 'I just bought this living room set from Ethan Allen,' 'Oh, me too!'"

Dyer recognizes a classic design when she sees one, but isn't afraid to incorporate a few off-the-rack pieces into her decorating scheme. In fact, the mirror that greets visitors to her one-bedroom condo at the Murano Grande in Miami Beach, is from the Barbara Barry Collection for Baker. But she bought the 1970s, seagrass-covered credenza that sits below it from an antique shop on Biscayne Boulevard in North Miami Beach, for about \$150.

Her personal decorating philosophy is appreciated by her clients, most of whom are looking for that fabulous piece that nobody else has. Much like the trend in fashion to mix high and low pieces for that just-my-style ensemble, many interior designers are bringing together refinished antiques and vintage finds with new (although sometimes retro-looking) pieces, to better represent a client's persona.

"It's like looking for that vintage Valentino dress at Goodwill," Dyer said, "except it's a Gio Ponti chair, instead."

Dyer developed her passion for hunting down old pieces while working at the South Beach Design Group, an interior design company in Miami Beach. It was there she met Brett Mickan, a colleague who helped show her how to shop with an eclectic aesthetic. "It was about looking a few steps ahead," she said, "seeing what something can become after you strip it, lacquer it and change the hardware."



JENNIFER DYER
 In her Miami Beach condo; below, a detail of her coffee table made from a base of antlers.

Realizing that she had a knack for the hunt, and that there was a demand for these remade pieces, Dyer decided to start her own interior design company. With the encouragement of her friend and client, Carlos Castellar, and her boyfriend, Ole Rommesmo, Dyer started Funkshun Home, an Internet-based company that provides consulting and product resources, mostly to the trade.

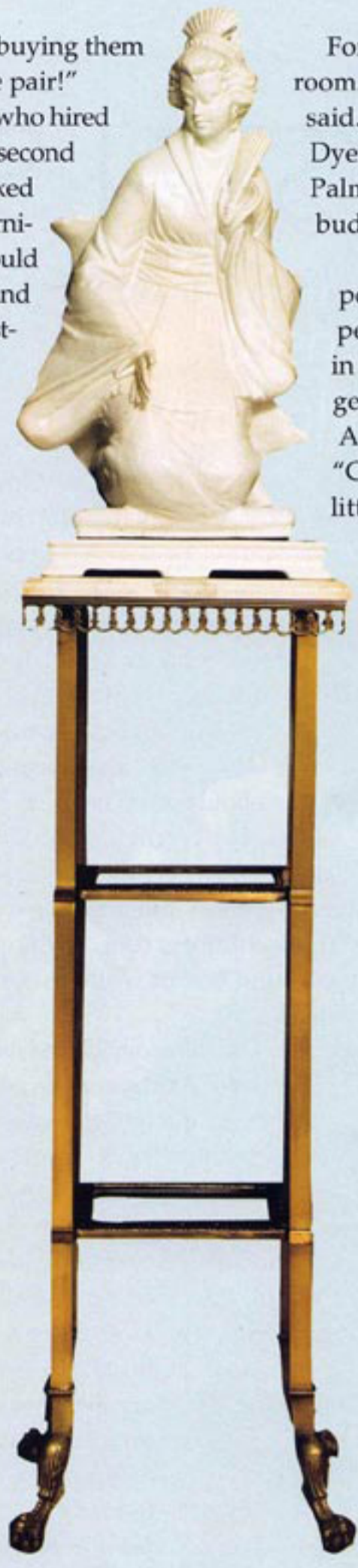
She has resources from around the country, including a shop called Horns a Plenty in Ely, Nevada, where she bought her own coffee-table base for \$900. "There was a pair of horse-head lamps I just had to have for one of my clients," she said. "I first saw them in a shop in California for



1,000 each, but refused to pay that much. I ended up buying them from a French antiques dealer in Miami—\$500 for the pair!"

For Evelyn Caskin and Michael Pearson, a couple who hired Dyer to decorate their three-bedroom apartment, a second time, at the Murano Grande in Miami Beach, Dyer mixed 1940s Art Deco pieces with luxurious, upholstered furniture. A pair of credenzas that to the untrained eye would appear unsalvageable, with their rusted metalwork and wallpaper cabinet lining, are now among Caskin's most-loved pieces, after Dyer revealed their beauty.

"I had that wallpaper torn out and replaced with antique mirrors, refinished the wood and changed the metalwork," Dyer said. "We bought the pair for \$500, but you'd never know it now."



For the same couple, Dyer wanted to spruce up the powder room. "I love seeing a piece of furniture in the bathroom," she said. "It makes you feel like you're in some grand boudoir." Dyer found a small cabinet for \$250 at an estate sale in West Palm Beach, and had it refinished in aqua. She placed a small bud vase from Jonathan Adler on it, to add a bit of humor.

In her own apartment, Dyer's favorite piece is a porcelain geisha that stands watch over her Chinese Chipendale chairs (purchased at another estate sale, this one in Palm Beach, for an unbelievable \$600 for four). The geisha is extremely delicate. "I bought it for \$250 from Architectural Antiques in Coconut Grove," she said. "Cracks and all. I just loved it, and I knew it just needed a little extra care." ■



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Dyer developed her eclectic eye by shopping antiques stores, estate sales and some swell Web sites. Here are a few of her favorite resources:

- Alhambra Antiques, 2850 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL 33134, 305 446-1688
- Architectural Antiques, 2500 SW 28th Lane, Coconut Grove, FL 33133, 305 285-1330
- Gray Gardens Antiques, Montauk Highway at Poxabogue Lane, Bridgehampton, NY 11932, 631 537-4848
- Pepe's Refinishing, 140 NW 37th Street, Miami, Florida 33127, 305 573-5460
- Funkshion Home, www.funkshionhome.com, jennifer@funkshionhome.com, 305 807-2894
- www.horns-a-plenty.com
- www.goantiques.com
- www.lstdibs.com

A FEW OF HER FAVORITE THINGS

From the left, Dyer mixes old and new with a mirror from the Barbara Barry Collection from Baker that hangs over an antique credenza in her Miami Beach apartment; this antique porcelain geisha is her prized possession; a small cabinet adds a bit of elegance to a powder room Dyer designed at the Murano Grande.