

SANTA BARBARA SELECTIONS

BRUCE GREGGA'S FAVORITE FINDS IN THE AREA

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"California's Santa Barbara area is a beautiful place to shop," says Bruce Gregga. LEFT: "William Laman in Montecito carries casual things." ABOVE: Gregga inspects a circa 1823 chair.

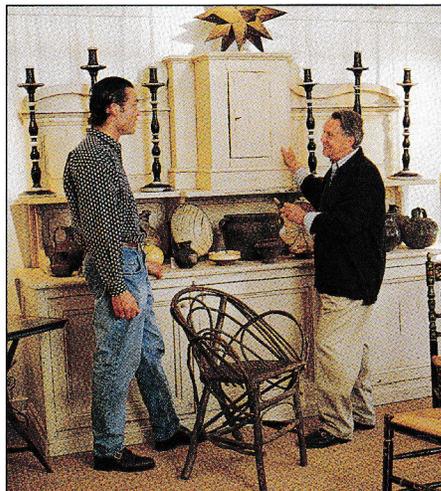
Text by Hunter Drobojowska-Philp
Photography by Jim McHugh

MONTECITO, CALIFORNIA, a community of centenary estates and ranches as well as newer houses, lies in the verdant foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Although it is just a few miles south of the larger city of Santa Barbara, locals tend to do their shopping in the tile-and-stucco plaza at the corner of San Ysidro and East Valley roads. There, along with the pharmacy, the bookstore and the Italian restaurants, a handful of antiques shops have gained a reputation for their high quality and their aesthetic variety.

A clutch of garden chairs on a green lawn and a sign reading William Laman: Furniture—Garden—Antiques announce a newcomer to Montecito. The gray-shingled cottage with its startlingly red Dutch door is



ABOVE: A French mahogany dining table set with a five-candle basket and assorted accessories rests by a cabinet displaying shelves of French Souléiado fabrics.



LEFT: Gregga and William Laman converse before a circa 1890 French *sacriste* cabinet arrayed with pieces of Afghan, Romanian and Guatemalan pottery.

the latest project of Chicago-based interior designer Bruce Gregga. After buying a house in Montecito three years ago and taking on clients from the area, he found himself a frequent flier to the charming beach town. Last spring he noticed that an antiques shop he'd patronized was out of business and up for lease. He and his partner, William Laman, renovated the store and opened it last November with an eye toward accentuating the different.

Throughout the cottage, which has been stripped to the rafters and painted white, the refined and the rough are at play. Dried moss topiary arrangements flank an old Chinese urn; worn paint on a chair suggests its circa 1823 Virginia origins. Country French furniture is intermingled with Kuba cloth hangings and masks from New Guinea.

"I think a house should be very sophisticated and mix all sorts of pieces together,"

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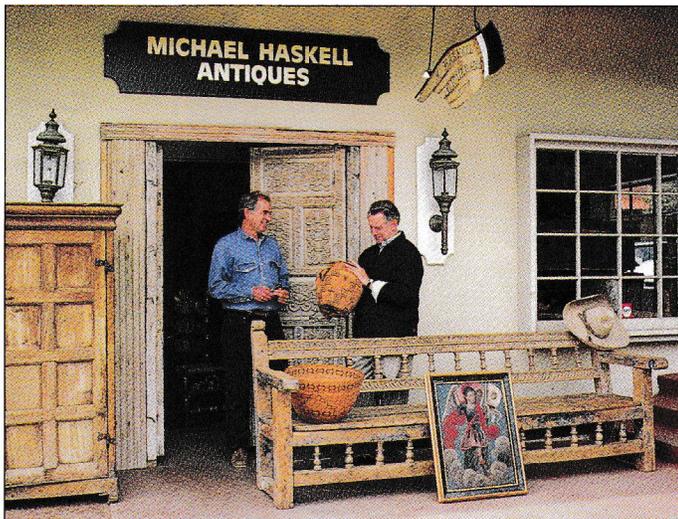
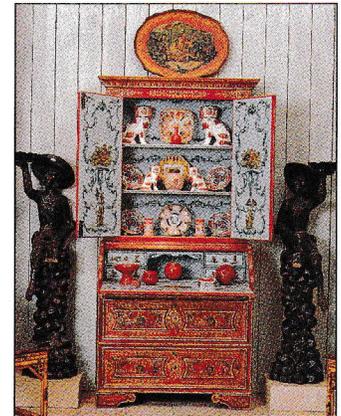
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Gregga explains of his *mélange*. "We have Philippine tables that are almost classical in their simplicity. We also have Spanish chairs made of woven tree trunks, painted American chairs and French garden chairs. You'll find African, Mexican and Chinese furnishings. But when those are gone, they won't reappear. I'll do something else. We don't want to repeat ourselves."

Despite the desire for new inventory, certain items will be in constant supply. William Laman is the West Coast representative for the Souléiadio line of fabrics and accessories from the Tarascon region of southeastern France. The bolts of cheery red, yellow and blue



LEFT: "You'll find eclectic offerings from European to Far Eastern objects at Bill Cornfield's Montecito shop." A Venetian chair, right, faces a Continental games table. BELOW: Venetian monkeys flank a Sicilian cabinet.



ABOVE: Proprietor Michael Haskell shows Gregga a late-19th-century Apache basket at his Montecito store. LEFT: Spanish colonial, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese furniture, ceramics, silver and textiles fill a room.

flowered material are stacked along one wall with matching articles for the kitchen and bath. "People who want the Provence look, which is so perfect for this area, will find it at our shop," says Gregga.

In addition, Gregga and Laman's store represents the Giati line of patio furniture, which is made in Santa Barbara. It also carries a line of French outdoor furniture made by Dablemont—reproductions of Louis XIV designs manufactured on a sturdy, grand scale in teak. "Garden mania has taken over this country as the number one hobby," Gregga says. "We have lots of garden-oriented things, such as planters, furniture and sculpture.

"We try not to feature what the other local stores have," Gregga continues. "And I like things that are moderately priced. If a couple want to furnish a house with high-end furniture, they can go to the other good shops in the area. I want people to be able to come in here and buy something sponta-

neously to freshen a table or brighten a room."

Since Gregga's goal is to complement, not conflict with, the other shops, he enthusiastically recommends the antiques stores in the larger building just a short walk across the parking lot from his cottage. "Bill Cornfield," he explains, "is an internationally known designer who has European antiques but also things from China and India. It's eclectic. He puts it all together, and it works."

Bill Cornfield Gallery is filled with glittering lamps and eighteenth-century Venetian and French chairs with silk and cut-velvet upholstery. "I think my shop is a tad more formal than others nearby," says Cornfield. "I started out buying English and French antiques. But not rustic, more of a town house look."

After casting about for a description of his store, he finally concludes, "It's everything that I can't fit in my own house but that I want to have.

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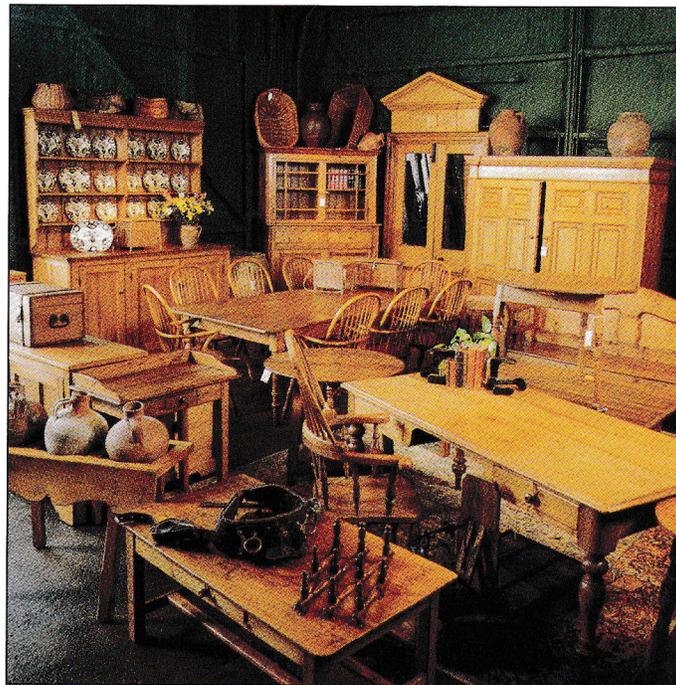
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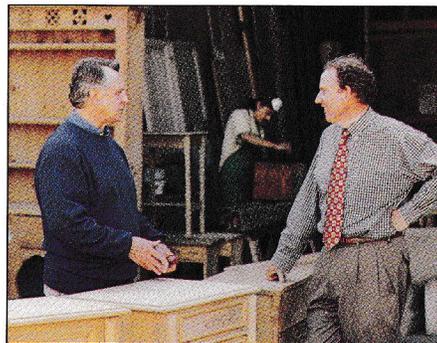
It spans all periods." He is known for such unusual juxtapositions as a hand-painted Sicilian secretary with nineteenth-century northern Chinese bamboo chairs.

As Gregga walks around the shop he pulls out an Indian chair carved in the shape of a peacock. "Look at this," he says triumphantly. Cornfield admits, "I like whimsy. I have fantasy pieces." He gestures toward a pair of carved wood monkey figures wearing hats, carrying trays and standing about five feet tall. "I was told they came from the estate of John Ringling North," he says with a smile.

Gregga ventures next to Michael Haskell's, which sells Spanish and Spanish colonial furniture from Mexico and Central and South America. Giant armoires fill the small shop. Religious paintings and santos from the past three centuries hang on the walls or lean on chests and tables. "Haskell gets respect from dealers all over the United States," Gregga says. "He has an uncanny eye, and his con-



ABOVE: "Santa Barbara's Pine Trader Antiques has the best in pine." An Irish kitchen cupboard and an English armoire dominate a showroom corner. **RIGHT:** Gregga discusses restoration techniques with Clive Markey.



tacts are fabulous. I love furniture like this because to me it's a piece of sculpture. Put it against a blank wall with nothing else, and it's form, shape, color and texture. But it's very difficult to be so restrained."

An eighteenth-century mesquite wood table with turned legs is lodged in the doorway, nearly blocking the entrance. Gregga stops to appreciate its stately, worn beauty. Haskell recently repurchased it from a pre-Columbian art collector to whom he had sold it twenty years before. Gregga then discovers a stack of Mexican lottery cards framed in glass. "Aren't these wonderful?" he asks rhetorically. Haskell nods, noting laconically that ten similar cards recently sold at Sotheby's for eleven thousand dollars.

Haskell started his business with Native American art and branched into Spanish colonial furniture because he liked it "and nobody else was buying it." His eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pieces include Ecuadoran devotional figures, a Mexican traveling altar, Peruvian cabinets, a Bolivian carved bench and a gilded and painted Spanish chair. Gregga and Haskell point out that such Spanish-inflected design works effortlessly with the Mediterranean architecture popular in the area. Of late, as the old estates are broken up, the furniture that was sold to families by dealers in the 1920s is being bought by Haskell. He sells some of it to new arrivals to the Santa Barbara region but notes that it has regained favor in its countries of origin as well. "I've sold pieces back to Mexican collectors," he says.

More of Gregga's favorite shops lie five miles north of Montecito in Santa Barbara. In

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LEFT: "I can have anything made in iron at Ironwood Designs in Santa Barbara." A wrought iron gate with Gothic, Italian and Moorish design influences provides a backdrop for lamps, lanterns and tables.

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the downtown area, Gregga recommends Ironwood Designs, owned by Sam Demachkie. "Sam makes anything you can imagine out of iron, all of it custom—chandeliers, tables, sconces, gates," says Gregga. "A chandelier can be tailored to the size you want with sconces to match. He wires lamps and makes beautiful parchment shades. Ironwood is a great resource that designers can use. But local residents have things made too." One caveat for shoppers: It is open by appointment only.

Gregga's next visit is to the nearby Pine Trader Antiques.



BRUCE GREGGA'S CALIFORNIA CHOICES

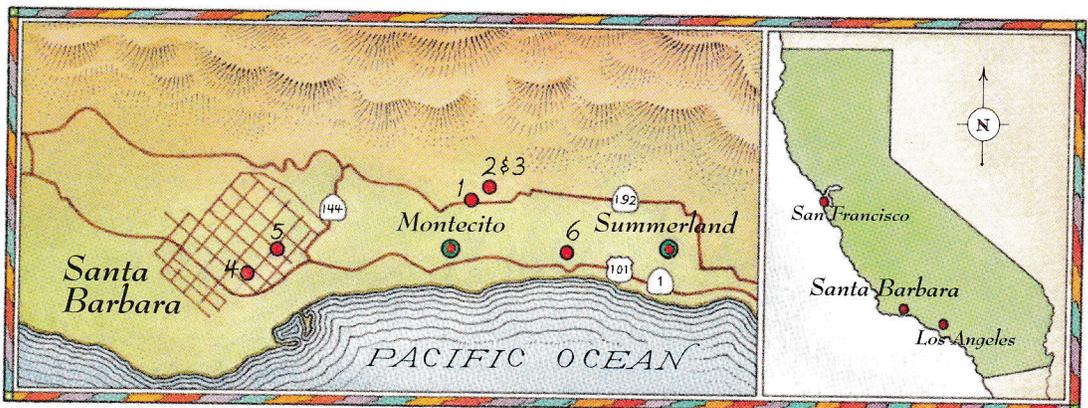
- 1 **WILLIAM LAMAN**
1496 EAST VALLEY ROAD
MONTECITO 93108
805/969-2840
Casual and country antiques, furniture and garden accessories
- 2 **BILL CORNFIELD GALLERY**
539 SAN YSIDRO ROAD
MONTECITO 93108
805/969-3337
Eclectic European, Far Eastern and Indian antiques
- 3 **MICHAEL HASKELL**
539 SAN YSIDRO ROAD
MONTECITO 93108
805/565-1121
Spanish colonial antiques and Native American art
- 4 **IRONWOOD DESIGNS**
725 DE LA GUERRA PLAZA
SANTA BARBARA 93101
805/962-4334
Wrought iron furniture, lighting and gates
- 5 **PINE TRADER ANTIQUES**
410 EAST HALEY STREET
SANTA BARBARA 93101
805/962-0250
English and Irish pine furniture
- 6 **SUMMERLAND ANTIQUE COLLECTIVE**
2192 ORTEGA HILL ROAD
SUMMERLAND 93067
805/565-3189
Antique and contemporary furniture and accessories



ABOVE: "Summerland Antique Collective, which carries so many happy things, lies in a wonderful little beach town." LEFT: Owner Lauren Wells and Gregga examine English chintz pottery.

Owner Clive Markey "has warehouses of cabinets, trestle tables and school benches," says Gregga. "I found a load of panels from a school, and now I have a beautiful pine-paneled library in my house." Markey, himself a British import, specializes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pine furniture from

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England and Ireland. He ferrets out antiques in old pubs, castles, schools and convents, and then restores and refinishes them. "I'm interested in unusual pieces," he says.

Markey, who is trained in restoration, began selling English and French antiques after moving to California. He decided to specialize in pine a decade ago. He displays only antique pine, with the exception of the Windsor chairs he makes to accompany his popular dining tables. "I like Irish pine, mostly nineteenth century, because it's more primitive and simple-looking. Pine is low maintenance. Kids can do homework on it; you can't destroy pine. The more you use it, the more it appreciates in value. It goes with the casual California lifestyle. And it's very affordable. People don't have to worry about it being perfect."

After leaving Santa Barbara, Gregga stops in the tiny town of Summerland, a few miles south of Montecito. Of the many shops there, he selects the Summer-

land Antique Collective and Annex, which hosts twenty-five dealers. "You can always find something. I've bought wonderful quilts and some garden furniture from them." One of the dealers is owner Lauren Wells, who opened the collective seven years ago and says that she treats it as a retail rather than an antiques shop, highlighting trends in California interior

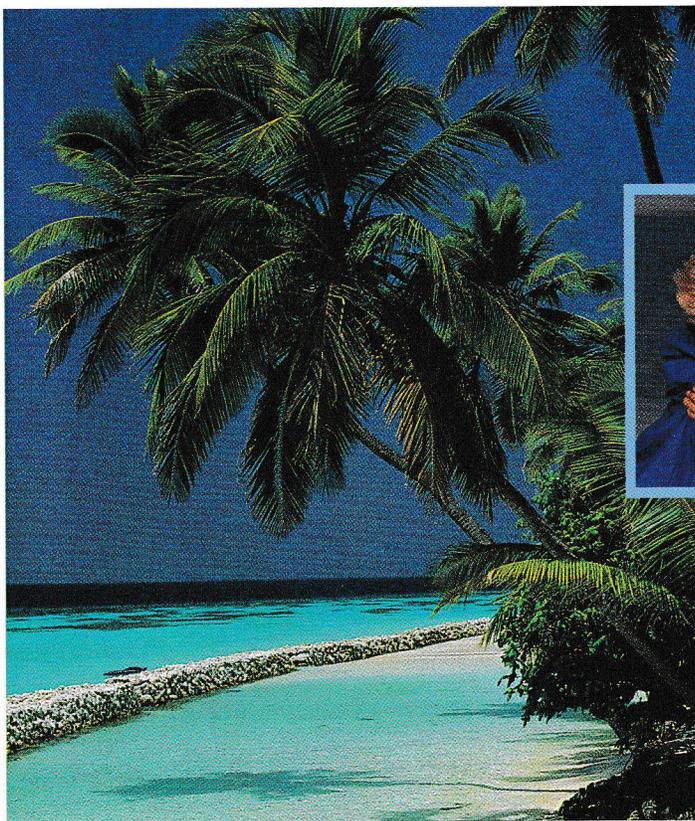
"A house should be sophisticated and mix all sorts of pieces together."

design. "This is a place where you can come to decorate your entire house," she says. "We have accessories, and a wide variety of furniture, so you can buy a sofa to go with your antiques.

"We offer what's popular," she adds. "In the nineties, people would rather

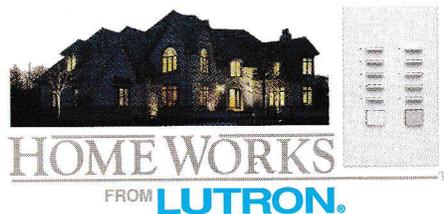
spend less money and buy a reproduction that's thirty years old with a good look to it." She motions toward her Chintz Room, framed by a white archway. "There's a continuing interest in the English country cottage look. Chintz pottery is really popular now. You can hardly find it anymore. I intersperse the forty patterns I have with what I call 'chippy' painted wood furniture and floral fabrics." Her plate racks are lined with examples of Royal Minton and Spode. Other dealers offer everything from Asian antiques to fifties Americana, from old English silver to Bakelite knickknacks.

As for his preferences in stores, Bruce Gregga explains, "I have no qualms about going to other shops. If there's a piece I want, I buy it from them. When I do interiors in California, even now that I have my own shop, I wouldn't think of using it as my only resource. I would go to Cornfield's, Haskell's and the rest of the shops I have on my list. Every store has something." □



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