

A photograph of a room with a gold-framed sofa, a chandelier, and framed pictures on the wall. The sofa is the central focus, with a white cushion and a gold frame. Above it, a chandelier hangs from the ceiling. On the wall behind the sofa, there are three framed pictures and a decorative panel. The room has a light-colored wall and a wooden floor.

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style
on a
SHOESTRING

You don't need money to have style. That's the Euro Trash mantra. Come to the Illinois home base of this imaginative furnishings company to learn the basics of luxury on a budget



OPPOSITE: Plain white fabric contrasts with gilded woodwork on a child-size settee. Juxtapositions of plain with fancy are a Euro Trash signature. ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Candlesticks made from converted lamp bases. A smattering of perfume bottles in the master bedroom. The team at work—Annie (on settee), seamstress/designer Pat King, carpenter/furniture re-imaginer Phil Black.

SHE'S COME A LONG WAY FROM THE DAYS OF HAULING CHANDELIERS home on airplanes (see our December 2006/January 2007 issue). Annie Brahler, founder of Euro Trash, now commands an entire 50,000-square-foot warehouse in unassuming Jacksonville, Illinois. Informally referred to as "the lab," this enormous Victorian brick building has become a think tank for the Euro Trash team, which includes carpenter extraordinaire Phil Black and seamstress-designer Pat King. "We're even more inspired," says Annie, whose clients are mainly interior designers and select furnishings shops. "Now we have a loading dock, a freight elevator, and two showrooms."

More space means more opportunities to brainstorm new spins on their specialty: creating one-of-a-kind furnishings that reuse architectural elements and common household paraphernalia, much of it gathered overseas. "Now I can play house," Annie says. "I really get to see what the stuff looks like in room settings, rather than having it all lined up or crammed together."

For Phil, having showrooms on site "is a lot like going into a grocery store. You take a little bit of this and that and put it together, and something great happens!"



Annie's Beaux Arts-style home was a testing ground for the company, a place to try out fresh ideas. The living room is all about comfort, but has an undeniably luxurious air. Who would believe that both sofas were dumped by previous owners? Annie reupholstered them and added feather-bed cushions. Behind the striped sofa, a whitewashed flour bin serves as a console.

beyond the obvious

SOFA, SO GOOD

Ignore the bright orange or canary yellow color of a used sofa and just look at its lines. Stay away from sofas whose cushions can't be detached, since you'll be tossing them anyway.

ACQUIRE AN ACCENT

Pick an accent color and use it throughout the house—but sparingly. A little goes a long way.



ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Isabel and a friend found robins' eggs in the park across the street and put them in a silver dish as a decorative accent. Detail of an ottoman cushion made from old English hemp. Book covers inspire room color palettes. "I never use fabric swatches or paint cards," Annie says.

WHEN PAT PICKS UP A CELL PHONE MESSAGE FROM ANNIE SAYING, "I have a chair for you to upholster" or "You should see this vintage trim," her mind immediately starts whirring. What does it look like? How should I use it? Despite her enthusiasm, she always takes a little time to think about the best way to approach a project.

On one occasion, Annie and Pat put their heads together on what to do with a low, round table. Pat decided that it would make a great ottoman for Annie's living room. Then inspiration struck and she decided to add a tufted "mattress" on top, with snaps to hold it in place. Flip it over to hide stains or remove it entirely to turn the ottoman into a game table. "I wanted it to serve two purposes," Pat says. "Furniture has to be functional—not just look good."



TOP LEFT: Jack the pooch poses in 15-year-old William's room, inspired by boating adventures in Florida. Carpenter Phil Black turned an old portico window frame into a headboard that alludes to a porthole. TOP RIGHT: An architectural fragment decorates the wall above 13-year-old Daniel's bed. BELOW,



LEFT TO RIGHT: "Library ladder" is just an ordinary extension ladder cut down to size, with plumbing pipe used as a rail. Paternal granddad's prize swordfish is on display. Large door on TV cabinet blocks window glare.



room to play

HARMONIOUS HOUSEHOLD

Use similar colors throughout the house. That way you can easily shuffle pieces around and everything will go together.

DETAILS, DETAILS

Add details from salvaged furnishings to unexpected places like the interior of an armoire. It doubles their impact and adds an aura of charm that's impossible to duplicate in a new piece.

A salvaged tremeau mirror that once incorporated a painting serves as the door of a media cabinet. Though wide, it's less than 2 feet deep.

"The trend toward slimmer plasma and LCD TVs means that there's no need for bulky cabinets that take up the whole room," Phil says.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A burlap skirt balances the sumptuousness of silk bedding in true Euro Trash fashion. Display art in frames within frames for fun. An old desk becomes a nightstand, its drawers

the perfect size for stashing magazines and the TV remote. A mini chandelier peeks from the vibrant inner folds of the 18th-century bed crown. Phil added a nifty on-off switch for the chandelier at bedside.



sleeping beauty

BEDSIDE MANNERS

Use chests of drawers and desks as nightstands in lieu of small tables. They nicely balance the extra-wide dimensions of king-size beds.

ROD SQUAD


Gild ordinary curtain dowels for a sumptuous effect. To really show them off, hang them above window height rather than flush with the window.

CROWNING GLORY

Add a surprise to a bed canopy. Use brightly colored fabric for the interior or tuck a tiny chandelier inside.



It's a media cabinet. It's sweater storage. It's a mirror. It's all three—and you'll never find it at a big-box furniture store. "The inside is finished with nice moldings so that the piece is just as beautiful when you have it open," Annie says.



Instead of a boxy island, Annie's kitchen centerpiece is a curved French console married to a white home-improvement store cabinet.

“Parts salvaged from old pieces can give new furniture some character.”

Phil Black

kitchen visions

MARVELOUS MARBLE

Honed, matte marble, instead of polished stone, adds a look of age to a kitchen.

GRAY MATTERS

Paint kitchen floors dove gray as an all-purpose backdrop.

DOORS BEGONE

For a custom look, remove cabinet doors and replace with chicken wire and fabric.



ABOVE LEFT: Annie deliberately painted store-bought cabinets white to emphasize the marriage of new and old. ABOVE RIGHT: Part of an old bed adjoins the far left edge of the white island cabinet. The sparkle of a crystal chandelier and silver candelabra contrasts with the simply painted floors.

DISSECT ANY EURO TRASH DESIGN, AND YOU'RE LIKELY TO FIND the "skeletons" of several pieces of furniture that were destined for the landfill. "Friends always check with me before they throw anything out, because I usually want whatever it is," Phil says. "There are always parts that can be combined with something else. Say an armoire is three-quarters gone. Use what's left and add it to another piece to create something new."

A saver of locks, hinges, and drawer slides, Phil sees beauty in these old hardware pieces. "Someone took the time to make them and they still work. You may never even notice them, but they give that rejuvenated piece some character, a little something extra."



the whole nine yards

HOOK UP

Put hooks on porch ceilings, pergolas, and other outdoor structures. Now you can hang chandeliers and sailcloth curtains at a moment's notice.

LIVING ON THE LAND

For an authentic European look, use "real" furniture outdoors. Decorate the porch with mirrors and art.

REVIVE OLD TEXTILES

Wash old feed sacks and other coarse textiles with fabric softener on the delicate cycle of an industrial-type washer. Dry in the sun whenever possible.



OPPOSITE: Pergola becomes a dining spot on warm days. CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: Ten-year-old Isabel (on daybed, right) and friends play cards in the side yard, as Ralph looks on. Tapestry pillow is "like a big piece of art." Annie sets the

table with a salmagundi of vintage objects. When Phil created a "chair bench" and passed it onto Pat, she webbed the bottom like a luggage rack and added upholstery and a cushion made from Belgian mail sacks. Porcelain chandelier adds atmosphere. 🐾





“It doesn’t
matter where
something comes
from as long as
it has *style*.”

—Isabel Brahler, age 10