

## Functional stylish treasures from the Orient



Table and chairs made from reclaimed teak

A visit to Best of Both Worlds is like wandering around a giant bazaar of exotic treasures from afar. Filled to overflowing with unique furniture, accessories, and decorative artworks, Best of Both Worlds Imports and Design is the passion of owner Robin Elworthy, who has been wandering the globe for over 35 years seeking out wonderful things to bring home and share with Victorians.

Local interior designers are among Best of Both Worlds' best clients, always looking for that perfect table, chair or artwork to add flare to their clients' homes. Landscape designers find unique outdoor sculptures here, while yoga studios and wellness clinics create the right vibes with artwork or other special pieces.

But many Victorians still haven't discovered Best of Both Worlds—which at 6000 square feet, houses one of Vancouver Island's largest selections of Asian house-



Robin Elworthy (l) and Nathan Germain

wares, furniture and home decor. That's likely because, though centrally located on Quadra near Hillside, it is set back from the street (which allows for onsite parking).

"I enjoy the creativity of what I do," says Elworthy. "It's fun for me, hunting for the unusual, going way off the beaten path. What sets us apart is I don't buy a lot of any one thing; these are mostly signature, one-of-a-kind, artisan-made objects, some with over a hundred years of history."

Elworthy originally focused on Thailand, getting to know his suppliers and their families on his buying trips. He has since taken on Vietnam and China. Over the next year, with the help of an old friend who has lived in China for many years, he will be bringing in even more authentic and refurbished Chinese antiques, including tables, chests, armoires and cabinets. But even now, there's a good selection of these durable, affordable and distinctive pieces which clients are using

to add both interest and function to their homes. Many wardrobes and cabinets are being re-purposed to house TVs and other electronics. Smaller cabinets are being used as attractive sink pedestals in bathrooms.

Also popular right now is reclaimed teak furniture from Thailand. Manager Nathan Germain points out how this line's solid wood tables and chairs hint of their past: an ox yoke becomes a chair support or table leg; the spokes of an old wagon wheel are reconfigured into a chair seat.

"These are high-quality pieces that will last a lifetime," says Germain. He finds locals very receptive to such re-purposing as they understand that teak has been over-harvested and is both very expensive and ethically questionable. Because the reclaimed teak used in Best of Both Worlds' furniture is over 70 years old, says Germain, you don't have to worry about it cracking. It is already well-cured!

The inventory is ever-changing as shipments arrive; among the offerings are pieces made from reclaimed, antique Russian pine. Says Elworthy, "The wood is from Russia, and the furniture is made in Vietnam. Beautiful pieces with lots of character and simple lines—everything from dining sets to large armoires."

The prices are good too. Each of these furniture lines—all made of solid wood—has a unique character, yet is not going to break the budget.

Other functional finds include Best of Both Worlds' collection of screens (as in room dividers), affordable



blinds, and the largest selection of silk cushions in Victoria (they supply many smaller shops)—as well as silk textiles, from gorgeous scarves and shawls to full length, hand-loomed table runners and wall hangings. There are also lamps that perform double-duty as art pieces, buddhas to grace your meditation area, and paintings and wall carvings to add an artful, Eastern touch to your home. This winter, go exploring for treasure... on Quadra Street.

**Best of Both Worlds**  
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