



ANTIQUES IN STYLE

THE ART OF THE HUNT

By Inessa Stewart
Designer

The grandeur of the hunt is expressed in this amazing frieze which appears over the carriage house of the west wing of what is now the remarkable Altoff Schloss-Bensburg Hotel in Cologne (Koln), Germany. Originally designed in the early 18th century for Anna Maria Luisa de Medici and Johann Wilhelm II, who truly understood the art of the hunt, the palace was abandoned before its owners could take residence due to a tragic hunting accident in which Wilhelm was killed. Glorious sculptures adorn the arched limestone crown of the passageway, surrounded by frieze work that covers all aspects of the 18th century hunting sport, rendered in a classical theme.

Flanking an antique hunting trophy are two framed charcoal drawings by J. Cassiers in their original frames, placed just above a finely carved walnut mantel. Add a dash of rustic charm with bundles of dried wheatgrass stalks.



Hunting has inspired countless works of art and antiques. Hunting lodges, houses and even chateaus were built to accommodate the sport. Art elevates the status of any subject that it encompasses, and hunting has truly been embraced and raised to a level of distinction.

What started ages ago as a necessity ultimately became a pleasure sport, and for many centuries has been gloriously expressed in all art forms including magnificent paintings, sumptuous tapestries, elegant sculptures and grand antique furniture. In recent history hunting was a status symbol enjoyed by both the gentry and nobility as a favorite pastime. For an aristocratic gentleman, the ultimate getaway was a spectacular hunt, and a rich European terrain abundant with forests provided a bounty of fauna and fowl for any desired excursion. The surroundings of their country homes often reflected a love for this activity, and eventually a unique hunt style developed, adding to the ambiance of the retreat and ultimate pleasures of country living. It is important to remember that just because the settings were often rustic, this by no means meant that they sacrificed grace or beauty in the process - in fact just the opposite was true, as countless works of art magnified the theme.

The boundless spirit of this sport has attracted many collectors over the years. Elements of available styles and spellbinding arrays of antique treasures can

be incorporated into the hunting theme, giving us incredible choices for any desired application.

I believe antique furniture should always be at the forefront of design installations, and in this case beautiful examples of hunt style furnishings have survived, crafted from the early 18th century through the late 19th century. A warm, captivating patina and intricate carvings are two of the foremost elements of antique French and Italian hunt buffets, bookcases, chairs and armoires of this genre. This kind of furniture has been popular for centuries, and today demand is strong. This theme can give a room a rustic yet refined soul with a certain identity. When you study the detail of exquisitely-made pieces such as these, you come to appreciate the fine woodcarving and the artists who created them. Today, as we restore these amazing pieces, bringing them back to their original glory, we have the opportunity to examine this refinement close at hand.

Antique paintings and sculptures captured the art of the hunt with a glorious vivacity, fervor and passion. This is the primary reason for collectors to gravitate to these, inspired by the exuberance of the sport and the captivating compositions of the subjects. The variety is vast, ranging from still life images to landscapes with hunting parties to renderings of dogs, horses, stags and fowl. Art creates an invaluable impact in any interior scape by intensifying the effect of a theme with expressive and authentic vigor.

Of course two of my favorite forms of expression with antiques are accessories and lighting, which add an extra layer of desired effect to any design. Lighting

naturally accentuates the architectural and interior design features, and during the 19th and early 20th centuries it was always a major part of any room, illuminating the theme even with ardent impact.

As for accessories, they can be considered the icing on the cake, adding textural and finishing touches with an endless artful blend that makes a home feel nicely appointed while still relaxed and comfortable.

I hope this will move you to create your own hunting-inspired retreat with unexpected one-of-a-kind antiques, enriched by prized collections embodying the true essence of European style.



For a rustic interpretation, fresh greenery can be assembled surrounding an antique carved wood hunt sculpture as the centerpiece, accompanied by leather riding boots and illuminated by an antique bronze altar candlestick lamp, all set upon a Country French walnut buffet. For a background, we have a framed antique landscape painting mounted on a distressed wall panel.