

INTERIORS



SISTER ACT
Sisters Emily (left) and Victoria Ceraudo at Victoria's flat in London

START YOUR COLLECTION

There are now a range of options to buy antiques online from high-end dealers

- Designer Rose Uniacke stocks antiques along with her own range (roseuniacke.com)
- Sisters-in-law Sarah and Sally Wilkie run the 'vintage and antique furniture store Home Barn (homebarnshop.co.uk)
- 1st Dibs functions as an online platform for dealers to sell direct to buyers (1stdibs.com)
- Vinterior is a marketplace to buy and sell vintage furniture (vinterior.co)

'We want furniture with character'

Jessica Salter meets two sisters who are shaking up the fusty world of antiques – and injecting design classics into millennials' homes

PHOTOGRAPHER: NATASHA DAVIES

How do you ensure that your home isn't an identikit version of everyone else's? Eschew the high street and add antiques; the bonus is that it's a more eco way of furnishing. After all, even Steve Howard, Ikea's former head of sustainability, said that as a nation we had hit "peak stuff".

But buying antiques is something that can fill us with fear: are we going to get it right? Will it look good in situ? Are we being ripped off? 'Antiques are harder to source than new furniture, and you're not sure how they will all blend together with the furniture you've already got,' says Victoria Ceraudo, 31. Her sister, Emily, 34, adds that going into a traditional antiques dealer can be overwhelming. 'If there aren't prices on anything, you don't know where to start, and it can feel like an alien world.'

Trends are changing, and we've increasingly been turning to vintage and antique pieces to add interest to our high-street homes. Pinterest reports a 115 per cent increase in searches for "vintage interiors" and a 60 per cent surge in those looking for Edwardian style. This is also the reason that Victoria and Emily founded their eponymous brand, Ceraudo.

The sisters grew up with a "massive interiors enthusiast" mother who has always loved buying antiques from dealers, as well as scouring eBay. 'The houses we've lived in have always been full of character,' Victoria says. When it came to decorating their own spaces, they wanted, as Victoria puts it, "furniture with character".

Emily, a trained architect who previously worked with Tom Dixon, and Victoria, who worked in fashion for brands including Giorgio Armani, realised they had an idea for a business: sourcing reasonably priced antiques that would work well in modern, fashion-forward homes.

The sisters find all their own antiques, heading to markets around the country with a van. All this with Emily's two children at home aged two and five months, and Victoria with one on the way. 'You have to get there by 6am when the doors open, and run around in the first half-hour or the good stuff goes,' says Victoria. 'But they are really hit and miss; some years, Newark's amazing, sometimes it is awful.'

They also go to auctions, which they say are still very "male dominated", something the Ceraudos have fun with. 'We've found that lots of men who have been going to the same auctions for years are a bit surprised when we turn up and start bidding and buy a lot,' says Victoria.

It's only then that they realise we know what we're doing. We've had a couple of men who've been in the business for years come up to us afterwards and ask for advice. They are used to

buying things like big, beautiful bureaux or large wardrobes that in the Eighties and Nineties they could have charged thousands for. But people aren't buying that any more. Now those pieces go for peanuts because no one wants them.

Instead, the sisters focus on buying small pieces that will fit in millennials' rented flats or small starter homes. Big sellers with charming details include side tables, bedside cabinets and chairs, along with accessories including mirrors, tapestries and architectural drawings.

'We find that a lot of people have a sofa from the high street, but they want to add little pieces and flourishes,' Victoria says. 'It's really good to start with accessories and layer it up slowly; a whole room full of antiques can look mismatched and old-fashioned.' Our desire to ditch the flat-pack has meant that even with a bit of competition, demand was outstripping supply. 'It's quite hard to find lots of bedside tables,' says Emily.

In April, they launched their own line of antique-inspired, made-to-order furniture – Pomel by Ceraudo. It is, as Victoria describes it, "contemporary chintz"; *Vogue* called it "seriously smile-inducing".

'We noticed that the antiques that were selling well were the cane pieces, so we introduced a cane-and-lacquered range,' adds Victoria.

But their biggest hit has been their range of upholstery, from cocktail and armchairs to footstools. While not fully bespoke, they can be customised in choices of fabric, and whether it has a fringe or a skirt.

'You feel like you're playing a role in the design of your item,' Emily says. Despite the foray into selling new furniture, the sisters are still keen to emphasise the longevity of their items. They have cleverly created an eco-friendly way to refresh furniture – buying new covers when they bring out a new colourway for their pieces. (If a customer sends in their old covers, they will receive a discount and the covers will be recycled.) After all, as Victoria says: "Not everyone wants one style forever."



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GET THE LOOK



OTTOMAN
£3,000, guinevere.co.uk



BEDSIDE CABINET
£400, ceraudo.com



CANDLE-STICKS
£45, ceraudo.com



ARMCHAIR
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OAK ARMCHAIR
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A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY
Antique Imari plate, top; 'Madeleine' bistro chairs from Ceraudo's collection, middle; a Victorian cane deckchair, left