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Roots of the Old Silk Road

Sunnyside Trading Co. offers buyers a piece of history

BY LAUREN WEBB

Tucked in the River Arts District is a business showcasing beautiful and captivating antique pieces from Southeast Asia, India, and Northern Africa. Stuart Hough, the founder of Sunnyside Trading Co., has been a part of the antique trading business for 40+ years. With a keen eye and developed taste, he pulls quality products into his shop. Stuart travels the roots of the Old Silk Road to find the most unique and interesting objects, ranging from antique furniture and architectural elements, rugs, eastern spirituality statuary, and all things cool.

The forerunner to Sunnyside Trading Co. was a European antique shop in Denver, Colorado in 1979. Stuart and his sister were wanting to simply give his mother something to do, and having her run an antique shop seemed like the right fit. Stuart was studying in Boulder, Colorado, gaining a degree in history—something that certainly enables his ability to dive deeply into other cultures and find quality pieces. Stuart was a European antique dealer for 30 years and even raised his children in Paris. After 30 years of studying European culture and antiques in-depth, Stuart was ready for a new adventure and began studying and visiting North Africa, India, China, Thailand, and Turkey. He found different products in these countries that had deep cultural meaning and piqued his interest.

Stuart began his journey working and dealing with Southeast Asian antiques and was eventually brought back to America. He spent time wholesaling for an employer located in Connecticut, with showrooms in Manhattan, New York and

High Point, North Carolina. Stuart's daughter was visiting him and asked to check out Asheville for a night on the way to High Point. Stuart quickly became enamored with Asheville, realizing it had much more breadth and depth than his original idea of it. He found the community to be artistic and like-minded. He moved here quickly after his visit and soon started Sunnyside Trading Co. in the River Arts District.

Sunnyside Trading Co. is special in that it offers a product not many others are selling. Most antique sellers are selling European products, while Sunnyside Trading Co. is focused on Southeast Asian and Indian pieces. The 12,000 square-foot showroom receives 6-8 containers a year, and will soon receive a Chinese antique container, carrying 150-175 pieces. With Stuart's expertise and longevity in the business, his products are of great quality. He has built relationships with people in other countries and has trusted sources. Additionally, Stuart handpicks his pieces. There is no catalog or wholesaler he purchases from. Instead, Stuart intentionally and attentively chooses each item displayed at Sunnyside Trading Co.

For Stuart, Sunnyside Trading Co. is so much more than a shop selling antiquesque items. Each product is a piece of history. It is easy for him to imagine where an item came from, and what it would have been like in its original place and use. Buying these products and gaining knowledge of different cultures is what keeps Stuart invested. He loves traveling and learning firsthand how these different cultures function. He



The Silk Road runs through Asheville



Stuart on his favorite bench.



Every item offers a piece of history.

has gotten to experience how a middle-class Indian family might live day to day, and those are the types of experiences that make selling antiques so special- they are like personal artifacts showing the history of families and cultures. Stuart also thrives on the side of traveling: loving Thailand for its beauty, with wonderful people and jungle temples, finding Morocco exotic and mysterious, and engaging with Indian people as he currently strives to learn more and more about their history. His travels allow him to see past the first layer of tourism and begin to understand the components of local life. Stuart says that the whole world is very connected, and that "people around the world have similar desires: health, security, and opportunity for their family."

Stuart is proud to have been a part of this business for 42 years, buying, selling, and studying different cultures and their products. He "feels blessed to have been able to buy beautiful things and learn new cultures." He hopes that when you think of Sunnyside Trading Co., you think of the positive and creative energy within Sunnyside's offerings and enjoy owning his own-of-a-kind pieces featuring quality, charm, whimsy, and history.

Keep an eye on their website at sunnysidetradingsco.com for updates on new pieces.