



DEMYSTIFYING FRENCH STYLE

DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, France astonished the world with her masterful artisanship, setting standards of excellence that tastemakers worldwide openly admire and by which they judge Fine French Furnishings and most everything else. Along posh Paris streets lined with luxury boutiques and high-end antiques, and in secondhand shops throughout the provinces, it is both well known and accepted that the French *still* are famously hard to please, three centuries later.

Indeed, they expect a level of workmanship that, more often than not, only money can buy. Faced with the task of returning an aging manor to splendor it has not seen for years, the conventional wisdom is that some things are better left undone rather than done poorly or given a quick fix. This is why many of the more than one hundred *châteaux* built centuries ago in the Loire Valley remain in serious disrepair, leaving some with leaking mansard roofs, falling stone, rotting window frames, crumbling plaster walls, buckling wooden floors and unreliable heating, languishing unoccupied after passing from one generation to the next.

From the statement-making Bars de Montpellier reclaimed stone flooring that originally embellished a seventeenth-century *bastide* (two-story country house), to the stone surround openings (two unseen), to the eighteenth-century furnishings, there is no shortage of panache in a *hall d'entrée*. The hand-painted panels adorning the ceiling are from the same era but transported from Sicily by Chateau Domingue, Houston, the premier stateside source for European architectural antiques. Sterling roses add an unexpected note of color to the otherwise monochromatic aesthetic.