



Nineteenth-century Italian crystal-and-wood sconces flank a large, 19th-century mirror and console decorated in rocaille at Chateau Domingue. The pair of stone urns is from Spain. OPPOSITE: A pair of pyramid planters punctuates this garden vignette in the showroom of Chateau Domingue.



Contributing Editor Susanna Showers Moldawer and Market Editor Rebecca Sowell stroll down West Alabama to discover what's new inside the eclectic mix of shops

## Houston Shopping

WHEN *SOUTHERN ACCENTS'* MARKET EDITOR Rebecca Sowell asked me to write a story on shopping in Houston, I jumped at the chance. How could I pass up the opportunity to go shopping as part of my workday? Rebecca was interested in the two of us visiting several shops on a street called West Alabama. Maybe her curiosity was piqued because she's from Alabama. Or maybe she had heard about the new shops that have opened. Whatever the reason, we had a great time exploring the design-oriented stores dotting the street.

Our first stop was **Chateau Domingue** (3615-B West Alabama, 713/961-3444), a 5,000-square-foot warehouse filled with architectural and garden antiques. Proprietor Ruth Gay had the idea for the

shop after dealing with frustrations in building her own home. She and her husband had traveled to France to find architectural elements for their residence. "Our trip left us discouraged—we knew these pieces existed, but because we didn't know where to go, we came home without the flooring and hardware we had hoped to find," Gay explains. So she decided to open her own shop with such items and spent two summers in Europe finding her sources.

The result is a showroom with French mantels dating to the 15th century, reclaimed French and Italian floor and roof tiles, fabulous doors from Italian villas and French châteaux, and hundreds of other unique objects. For the garden, we found 16th-century fountains, faux bois chairs and tables, and French