



# Lolo French Antiques et More

Through their shop in Alabama, this couple is aiming to change the way people think about antiques.

Venture into the Avondale neighborhood of Birmingham, Alabama, and you may happen upon a treasure trove of French antiques. In addition to 14,000 square feet of gilded mirrors, painted tables, and patinaed furniture spanning the 17th through 20th centuries, Laurent “Lolo” Gouon and his fiancée, Mimi Montgomery, are offering a fresh perspective on the industry.

“I just wanted people to not think of antiques as dusty old furniture that their grandmama had,” says Mimi, who first met Laurent at an antiques show in Atlanta, Georgia, seven years ago. The business, which Laurent started after coming to the United States from France, underwent a number of moves, the latest of which allowed for a significant expansion.







With the exception of a few items from Spain, Italy, and England, the pieces in the showroom are sourced directly from France. And with his decades of experience, Laurent lovingly brings each piece up to the highest standards.

But he's careful to point out that his pieces are restored, not refinished. By refinishing, he explains, "you lose some of that patina and that old wear and tear." Restoration, however, maintains the antique aspect while helping the piece look its best and making it fit to be used in the client's everyday life.

"You have to be able to use the furniture," Mimi says. "You can't just have it around and not sit on it or open the drawers." She hopes to dispel the myth that antiques are to be looked at and not used, and she encourages young couples to invest in pieces they can pass down to their children.

Eventually, Mimi and Laurent hope to start providing various workshops and demonstrations to the community in addition to their high-quality antiques. "I just don't want to be your regular old antiques store," Mimi says. "We just try to do different things that make us stand out and be a little bit quirky—like all antiques dealers are." ❀

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One of the ways Mimi hopes to "show people the fun side of antiques" is through the store's website, [lolofrenchantiques.com](http://lolofrenchantiques.com), which features colorful illustrations, a timeline of French antiques, guides to the various periods and styles of furniture, and more.



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