



A 19th-century [Manhattan apartment](#) by Jamie Drake. Photo: William Waldron

DECORATING

Forget Midcentury Modern: These Are the Antiques You Should Be Collecting

Designers Jamie Drake and Caleb Anderson share their collecting wisdom.

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Jamie Drake and Caleb Anderson know good antiques. The interior designers, who [joined forces last year](#) to form Drake/Anderson, are both known for their distinct ability to give new life to traditional pieces, blending old and new in a fresh and always interesting way. Drake most notably proved his facility with traditional design in 2003, when he outfitted the legendary Federal-style [Gracie Mansion](#) for New York mayor Michael Bloomberg in just three months. Since merging their talents, the two have undertaken a wide range of projects in equally varied styles, but in every one they are known to layer in a nod to the old in the form of antiques. This year the design duo will serve as honorary chairs of the [Winter Antiques Show](#), alongside Miles Redd and Celerie Kemble. Long a favorite of antiques enthusiasts in New York, the show is known for bringing together an array of new and established dealers under the vaulted roof of the Park Avenue Armory. This year, the show's 63rd, 70 dealers will be in attendance for a fair whose proceeds benefit the [East Side House Settlement](#), a South Bronx-based community organization. In preparation for the show's opening this Thursday, *AD* caught up with Drake and Anderson to hear more about the beloved show and get their advice on buying and collecting antiques.



Designers Caleb Anderson (left) and Jamie Drake.

Photo: Courtesy of Drake/Anderson

Architectural Digest: What makes the Winter Antiques Show so special?

Caleb Anderson: It really represents the best of what's available all in one place, and it's really well curated. It also brings not only designers and dealers, but also collectors and art and antiques enthusiasts of all kinds together in one place. So all of the events surrounding it foster really interesting conversations. I always learn something new from the show just through that network.

Jamie Drake: I think one of the things that's exciting is that it still has a lot of 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century antiques, which many shows do not anymore. So it's a wonderful opportunity to see beautiful things that are older and not just from the 20th and 21st centuries, and for people who maybe aren't as familiar with them, it's a great way to get to learn about them.



A circa-1775 George III gilt-wood armchair after designs by William and John Linnell from Hyde Park Antiques, one of Anderson's picks from the show.

Photo: Courtesy of Hyde Park Antiques

AD: The midcentury-modern movement seems to have taken over the design world. What are some other eras of antiques you would suggest collecting?

JD: Well, everything is a continuum. If you look at many midcentury pieces, you'll realize that they're often cleaned-up versions of something modern from an earlier period. We still have a great passion for earlier antiques, and, if anything, we feel like the midcentury wave has crested, and that when we're looking at that era, what we do want to find are the most unique and original—often commissioned—midcentury pieces rather than the more production pieces, which have already filtered down into the language, so they're more prevalent. Those pieces are certainly well done, but you face the question: Where do you draw the line between a production midcentury piece and Crate and Barrel?

CA: For me, a beautiful piece is a beautiful piece, and I think there are beautiful midcentury pieces, like Jamie said, but it's just becoming so common that we've been really gravitating back to these 18th- and 19th-century antiques. Even though they're old, there's something kind of new about introducing them into projects, since we're so used to seeing the midcentury products. I always tend to want something old in the room, whether it's midcentury vintage or an antique; I think that layer is important for any interior to make it more interesting.



A circa-1830 double-tier chandelier in carved wood and iron from Tillou Gallery, one of Drake's picks from the show.

Photo: Courtesy of Tillou Gallery

AD: Can you each recall when you became interested in antiques?

CA: When I was a kid, my parents didn't have any fine antiques, but my mom had some older things that were her great-grandmother's, and I always found myself really interested in these pieces and their stories, the history behind them. I had an aunt who had a beautiful old home and lots of antiques, and I was always so drawn to these different pieces of furniture and wanted to hear about where she had found them and where they were from. Even at a young age, I was so enamored of antiques, and that just grew over time. I love history, so I think that was always the intriguing tie-in for me.

JD: I grew up outside of New Haven, and I can remember early on going to the Yale Art Gallery and loving wandering around the silent Mabel Brady Garvan galleries, which are filled with the finest American antiques. So all those years later, when I started to work on Gracie Mansion, I had that in my memory. My mother also loved to go antiquing. We would go to these old antiques shops up in the hills of Connecticut, and she used to joke that when I was in a stroller I was a great spotter because I could see the bottom level and find what was hidden under the tables.





A 1948 console table by Gio Ponti and Paolo De Poli in Italian walnut inset with enameled copper tiles from Donzella is another of Anderson's favorites.

Photo: Josh Gaddy Photography LLC

AD: Is there a style or era each of you personally favors?

CA: I tend to like neoclassical-style pieces, like Adam and Hepplewhite. I'm more of a classicist; I like symmetry, and the lines tend to be cleaner on those pieces, so that's my personal preference.

JD: I have a passion for the Rococo and Baroque styles, the Louis XV things. We're currently working on an 18th-century house which will have modern touches, but we've been fortunate enough to be putting together a marvelous collection of 18th-century antiques to furnish it. So that presents an opportunity to kind of reappraise those, in a way that isn't just in a museum.

AD: Do you ever find that you learn about various styles of antiques from clients who are enthusiasts?

JD: Well, usually the clients have a certain enthusiasm, and we try to bring the knowledge into it. Once I had a project, though, years and years ago, in Nantucket. The client was very smart, really knew what she wanted, but she didn't know the words or the term to describe it. What she wanted, I finally discovered, was crewel stitchery and Stickley, Arts and Crafts furniture. And that's an instance where, because of that project, I developed a much greater appreciation for a style I had been not as fond of. After learning about it and really discovering the best in a certain style, one does train one's eye.

CA: I think one of the most interesting things as a designer is when you find one of those antique pieces and you're able to learn about its provenance and share that with the client. The story behind it is often what makes it exciting to a client. And, as Jamie said, it's really interesting how a lot of people, while they don't have the vocabulary and maybe aren't able to explain a piece in great detail, you can recognize the pattern of the types of antiques they do like and discern the styles they like.



Roi Soleil circa-1965 mirror by Line Vautrin in multicolor mirrored glass from Maison Gerard, another pick of Anderson's.

Photo: Courtesy of Maison Gerard

AD: What advice would you give beginner antiques shoppers?

JD: I would encourage people to look carefully and to engage with the dealers. The dealers have an enormous amount of information to share and are always passionate about what they sell. Someone who engages in their passion is always a delight to speak to. And, in that vein, if you find something that you're interested in or passionate about, then that's a great place to start buying. Don't just buy something that you think is a "good investment," or that a friend told you was the right thing to get. Buy what you find intriguing and will take delight in. And learn the story; tell the story.

AD: What's the best antique you've ever bought?

CA: A few years ago, in the city, I wanted an antique desk, and I met an artist who was selling one she had. It was a 19th-century, burl-wood Louis XV-style one with really beautiful bronze mounts. I got it for a great price, and it's still one of my favorite pieces, and a lucky find.

JD: The first time I went to the flea market in Paris in my 20s, and I was just overwhelmed with the bounty of the *marché aux puces*, I bought a wonderful, gorgeous Deco tea table in Macassar ebony with silver-plated mounts. I still have the tea table in my current apartment, and it really brings me back to that sense of discovery every time I see it.