

Dog Tales – Salvage Adventures While In Search of the Past

An occasional column by Mike Whiteside, co-owner of Black Dog Architectural Salvage

It's always hard to get away from the day-to-day operation of Black Dog Salvage in Southwest Virginia. What pleases me and my partner in crime, Robert Kulp, most is a drive down a road never traveled in search of architectural salvage's holy grail – whatever that may be.

This particular sojourn took us to the Midwest with the promise of finding a cache of old-world iron. It must have been dropped in the plains of Minnesota by some alien spaceship that found itself overloaded and had to dump some ballast. How else can you explain the presence of hundreds of tons of Middle Eastern ornamental iron on the edge of the prairie?

The trip's great find, though, lay in Minneapolis' metropolitan areas where the architectural salvage is abundant. Robert and I stepped into a small shop claiming a corner of a building at 4th and Washington. Not being shy, we introduced ourselves, with a thick southern drawl, to the lady behind the counter – Kathryn Daily.

She and her husband Charles run Lightworks with a collection of lighting that made this salvager's jaw drop. Charles has the ability to renovate and put a certified UL stamp on these beauties. Great job guys. I know we will be back.
www.lightworkslighting.com

Our next stop was City Salvage. Annie greeted us and let us know that owners John and Nicole were out for the day. The cool finds here were a vintage Foosball table from Germany, soon to live in my basement, and a Deco round bar with a full back made of pecan veneer and chrome trim that Robert discovered. I think he is going to build a house back home for it to live in. Great prices and cool finds. Well worth the stop.
www.citysalvage.com

Pressing on with our journey, we land at a warehouse that houses Gilded Salvage. By far one of the neatest, best-displayed architectural shops I have ever been in. Wandering around in awe, I find the sales counter adorned with some cool griffins. I wanted to show my staff how organization was done so I took a few digital pics for the folks back home. If finding what you want fast is what you're after, this is your place.

Checking the clock and wanting to press on to the next salvage extravaganza, I hadn't even put my seatbelt back on when we see our next destination. I've never seen so many great shops in one place! They can't be four blocks apart. This must be salvage Mecca.

We walk into Architectural Antiques, a place whose name says it all. In this well-groomed brick building we find ourselves instantly in the presence of greatness. From the vintage wooden scull hanging in the entry to the four-tier marble fountain in the center of the room, the purveyor of this shop has presentation and atmosphere down to a fine art. Being the beer garden shopper with Champagne taste that I am, I find that the price tags are straight off Park Ave with the quality to match. Manager Robert Jeffery introduced himself and gave us the guided tour through 25 years of collecting the castoff from America's architectural past. Even after making three rounds through this salvage shop we still didn't feel we saw it all. Next time we'll bring our lunch. www.archantiques.com

We finally find Art & Architecture, and their collection made me feel like I was back home again. Good presentation, but still enough clutter to enhance the search and

discovery, get your hands dirty, and put a smile on your face. None one told me about the dirt smudge on my nose, however. After discovering a massive set of iron brackets, I even found myself looking around to see who else was checking them out. The owner's warm welcome made us want to stay around much longer, even though it was closing time. Great stuff and loads of fun. www.artandarch.com

Worn out by the day's trek into Minneapolis' architectural salvage community, we head for the sunset. Disappointed because there's still more to discover, we promise to return some day. If your journey takes you to this part of the upper Midwest, make time to visit these shops, and bring a truck because a car just won't do when it's time to take it home.

Release the Dogs let the hunt Begin!

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