

Coral Gables news

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Bonnin Ashley Antiques specializes in classic furniture

BY ROBIN KORTH

Sorne Boloix Flick and her husband, Michael Flick, own and operate Bonnin Ashley Antiques, one of the largest antique businesses in South Florida.

Located in the Bird Road Art District at 4707 SW 72 Ave., Bonnin Ashley opened for business in 1986. Today the company specializes in classic and provincial antique furniture from around the world.

Sorne handles the day-to-day operation of the company's 10,000-square-foot showroom, while Michael, a trained sculptor and expert restorer, supervises the nearby 20,000-square-foot warehouse and restoration facility.

Before opening Bonnin Ashley, Sorne worked in the art and finance fields at such organizations as the Lowe Art Museum and the Southeast Bank Corporation Foundation. She was working as an executive secretary at a savings and loan company, but found herself unexpectedly pregnant in 1985 and quit after the birth of the child, confident that she could become her own boss while taking care of her daughter. "After returning from a six-month sojourn in Italy where I worked on an archaeological dig while my husband sculpted in Florence, we found ourselves searching for a place to live," Sorne recalls. "We bought a warehouse just behind our present location and converted the upstairs into a beautiful living space and planned to use the downstairs for my husband's sculpting studio. While he was in graduate school pursuing his master's degree in sculpture and our daughter was just three months old, I appropriated the studio to open two businesses simultaneously — Bonnin Ashley Antiques and Sculpture Space, an alternative gallery representing emerging artists. Robert Chambers, Karen Rifas and Bob Thiele showed some of their first



Sorne Boloix Flick

works with us.

"These were interesting and exciting times. Every six weeks we mounted an exhibition and we would have as many as 400 people coming through the gallery during opening night. Our exhibition schedule was synchronized with that of the Coral Gables galleries and we were the last stop on the tour. We also sponsored art salons and artists would show slides of their work for collectors and other artists. These evenings would go on until the wee hours.

"In 1988, two years after I started the business, my husband gave up his career as a sculptor to join me. It had also become apparent I had to choose between the two businesses. By that time the antique business had become our livelihood.

"Before Michael got involved, I spent

many an afternoon in the side yard with a pad sander in hand working on a piece of furniture. I'd have one ear cocked listening for the phone and one eye on my daughter in her crib. The company is actually named after that little girl in the crib — Bonnin Ashley."

In 1991, after their second daughter was born, the Flicks moved into a more conventional home and expanded the business upstairs. By the time their third child was born, they had moved the business to its present location on Southwest 72 Avenue.

Sorne is passionate about antiques and delights in sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm with her customers. She says Bonnin Ashley specializes in 18th and 19th Century European and American furniture.

"Aside from the breadth of the inventory," she says, "what impresses our customers is the obvious quality and variety we offer, which includes Hepplewhite, Biedermeier, Empire, Renaissance, Napoleon III, Louis XV, Louis XVI and European country pine." Besides exquisite furniture, Bonnin Ashley has heirloom-quality bed and table linens, paintings, mirrors, chandeliers and much more. Antique restoration and preservation is an integral part of the business.

"The restoration of our antique furniture is museum quality and takes place in a facility near the showroom, where the work is overseen by my husband, who prefers working alongside our restorers," Sorne says. "We facilitate the shipping of our furniture and provide expert crating. Because our clientele is international, we have extensive experience shipping to South and Central America, and the Caribbean, as well as within the United States."

Bonnin Ashley Antiques is open Tuesday-Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 305-667-0969.