

# Lyon's Share

Hunting for antiques in Lyon, decorator Matthew Smyth learns that the buck doesn't stop in Paris

Clockwise from right: Decorator Matthew Smyth heads for a courtyard full of shopping. Detail of an 18th-century Venetian chair at one of dealer Michel Descours's four boutiques. Religious icon paintings hang at another Descours shop. The Saône splits old Lyon from "new," where the city's antiques nexus, along the rue Auguste Comte, is located.



Writer and Producer: Kendell Cronstrom  
Photographer: Jörg Brockmann



New York-based decorator Matthew Smyth owns a flat in Paris, where he stays during his frequent shopping forays, but even part-time Parisians need to get out of the capital once in a while. When Smyth feels the urge, he takes a high-speed train ride to Lyon, only a two-hour trip away. A fabled center of gastronomy and silk, Lyon is less well-known as an antiques center, but the quality is good and the prices even better.

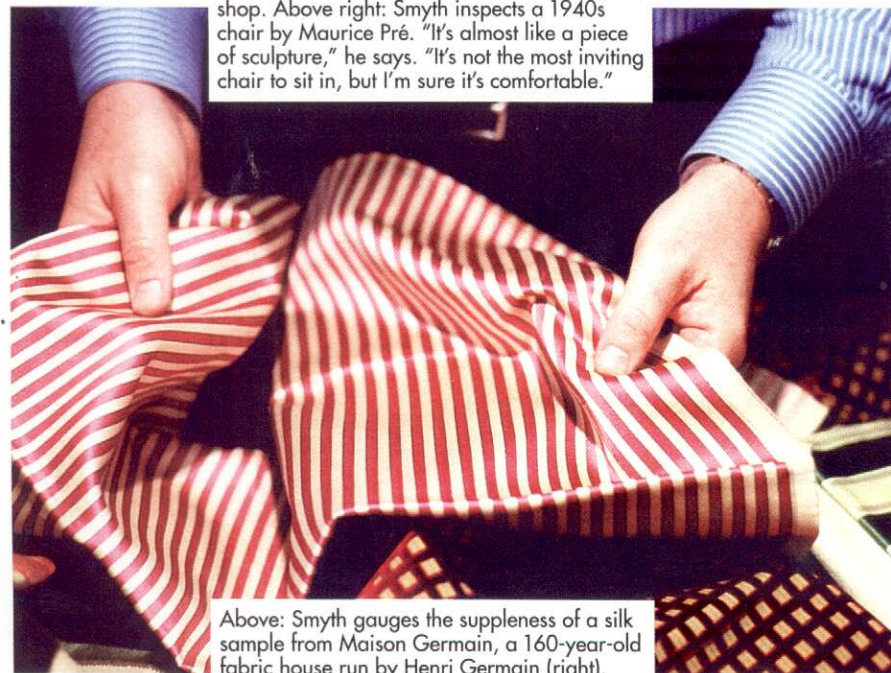
"Lyon has a different mind-set from Paris, and the experience of coming here is so refreshing," says Smyth, entering the Michel Descours gallery during a recent morning visit. Descours is the *éminence grise* of the Lyon antiques scene, and his shop on the rue Auguste Comte is a composite of four separate boutiques (each devoted to a different period), and an art-book store that is probably the best in France. After giving a quick lesson about a rare *fontaine à vin* from Bordeaux, Descours sends Smyth across the street to the 20th-century section, where manager Olivier Henry shows him a 1940s chair >



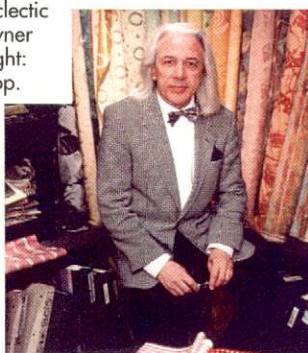
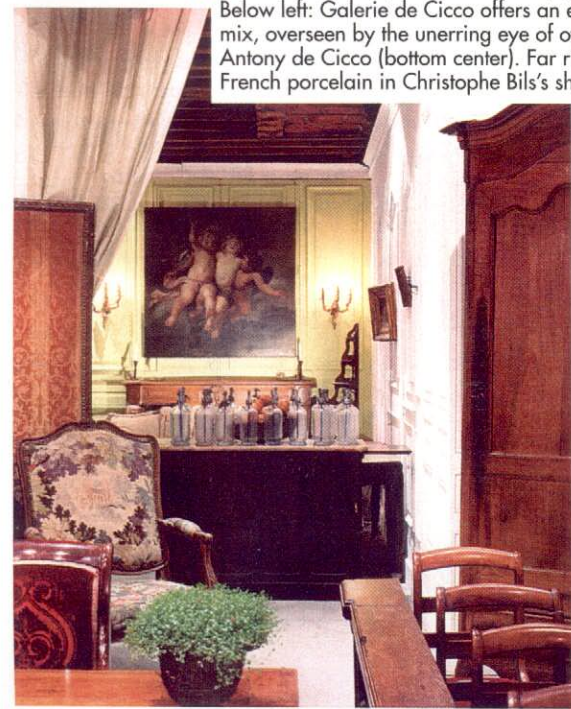




Above left: Smyth chats with Olivier Henry, manager of Michel Descours's 20th-century shop. Above right: Smyth inspects a 1940s chair by Maurice Pré. "It's almost like a piece of sculpture," he says. "It's not the most inviting chair to sit in, but I'm sure it's comfortable."



Above: Smyth gauges the suppleness of a silk sample from Maison Germain, a 160-year-old fabric house run by Henri Germain (right). Below left: Galerie de Cicco offers an eclectic mix, overseen by the unerring eye of owner Antony de Cicco (bottom center). Far right: French porcelain in Christophe Bils's shop.



## Matthew's Musts

The country code is 33; the city code is 4.

- **Christophe Bils**, 68, rue Auguste Comte; 78-42-89-50
- **Michel Descours**, 44, rue Auguste Comte (main shop); 78-37-34-54
- **Galerie de Cicco**, 43, rue Auguste Comte; 78-92-88-76
- **Henri Germain**, 11, rue Auguste Comte; 78-42-69-79

by Maurice Pré and a 1930s cabinet by Lyonnais furniture maker André Sornay. Next, it's off to Galerie de Cicco, which Smyth admires "for its sense of scale and sense of humor." He's particularly fond of an array of 19th-century candlesticks from Great Britain. Down the street, Christophe Bils, who specializes in porcelain, tempts Smyth with an under-the-chin shaving bowl and dozens of dinner plates: "It's easier to convince a client to purchase a set of plates," says Smyth, "than a giant piece of furniture." The final stop is Maison Germain, a family-run fabric house that dates from 1840. Smyth runs his hands over a panoply of wildly striped silks, thick printed velvets, Indian block-printed cotton, and sheer voiles. "I haven't bought fabric in Lyon yet, but I think I will soon." Although Smyth would like to linger, the venerable Descours has summoned him back to the shop, and the decorator arrives not a minute too late. "It's 12:30," Descours announces, latching his door and leading Smyth to his favorite *bouillon*. "In France, we eat!" ●

