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OCTOBER 2004

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Bo Childs revels in his architectural salvage yard. see page 3

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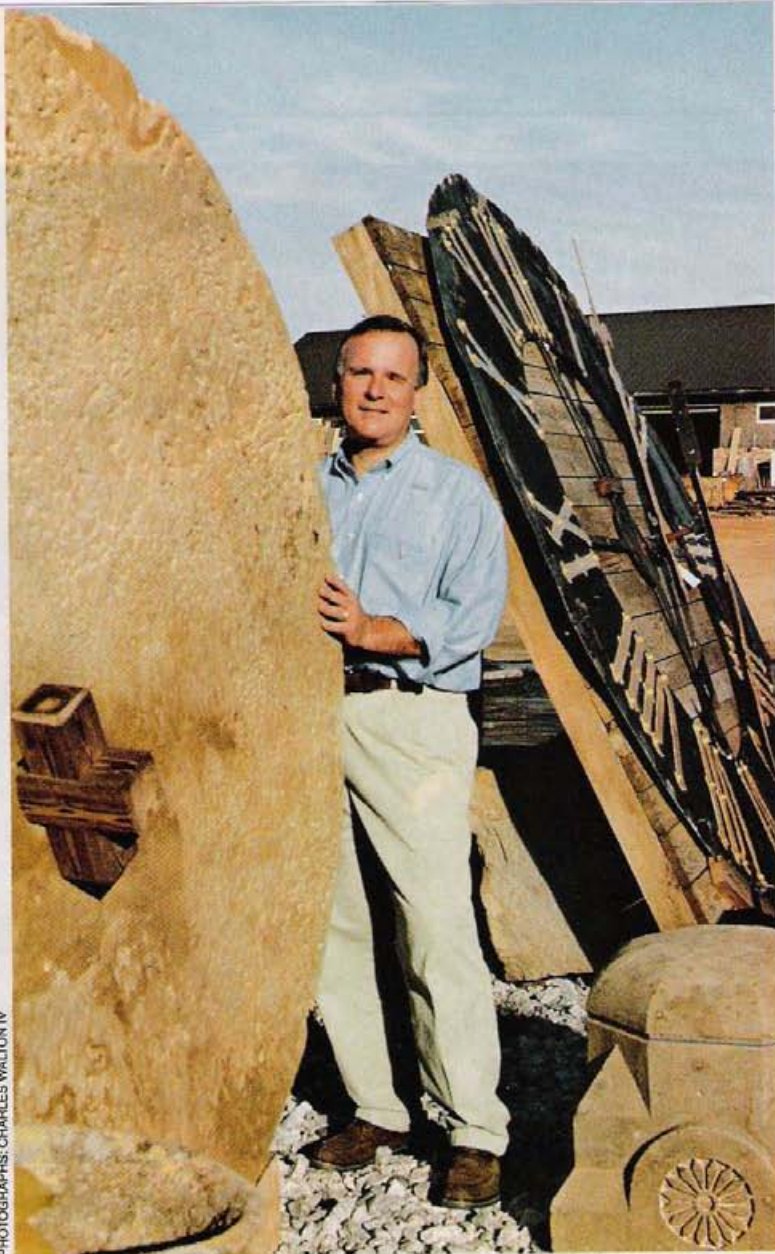
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left and above: Wyatt “Bo” Childs of Barnesville has a big old time preserving history by shipping pieces of it, large and small, across the Atlantic.

Antiques on a Grand Scale

The Old and New Worlds collide among the fascinating artifacts and building materials arrayed on this Georgia farm.

In four huge barns, a pair of farmhouses, and a sloping meadow between them on family land near Barnesville, Wyatt “Bo” Childs revels in a fascinating array of vintage European objects. Centuries-old millstones, clock faces, urns, fountains, sculptures, beams, and whole streets of stacked cobblestones crowd what he calls his “architectural salvage yard.”

All of it, plus choice pieces displayed in the small antiques shop he and wife Sherry operate in Buckhead, eventually graces fashionable homes or trendy businesses. That’s what Wyatt Childs,

Inc., is all about and why Bo frequently travels to France on kid-in-a-candy-shop missions to find and buy more remnants of the past.

His loyal clients—homeowners, builders, and interior designers who appreciate Bo’s talent for hauling home unique treasures—wish they could keep him their secret.

A Little Higher

Walk into the little showroom—which is jammed full of nicked armoires, dented columns, and restored chairs—just off Peachtree Street in Atlanta, and you can’t help but notice one particular prize: an imposing French crystal chandelier from about 1850. It captures even more attention at the moment because the shop owner perches precariously on a stepladder struggling to attach it to the ceiling.

Sherry, assisting Bo in the endeavor, suggests it might need to hang a bit higher, but he counters that customers can see the prominently placed fixture better without the distraction of nearby choices. Elsewhere stand Art Deco lamps and clocks, wall-sized Belgian oil paintings with

different early-1900s street scenes painted on each side of the canvas, and a wooden carousel chimp from the 1800s. A sculpted angel blasting on a trumpet soars. "We have a pair of those that came from an opera house in Alsace, France," Bo says.

Cornucopia

Just off I-75 near Barnesville, where an open field blossoms with finds from England, France, and Spain, the possibilities seem endless. Upon entering, you pass a line of hewn stone troughs collected from villages where they once slaked the thirst of horses, goats, and sheep.

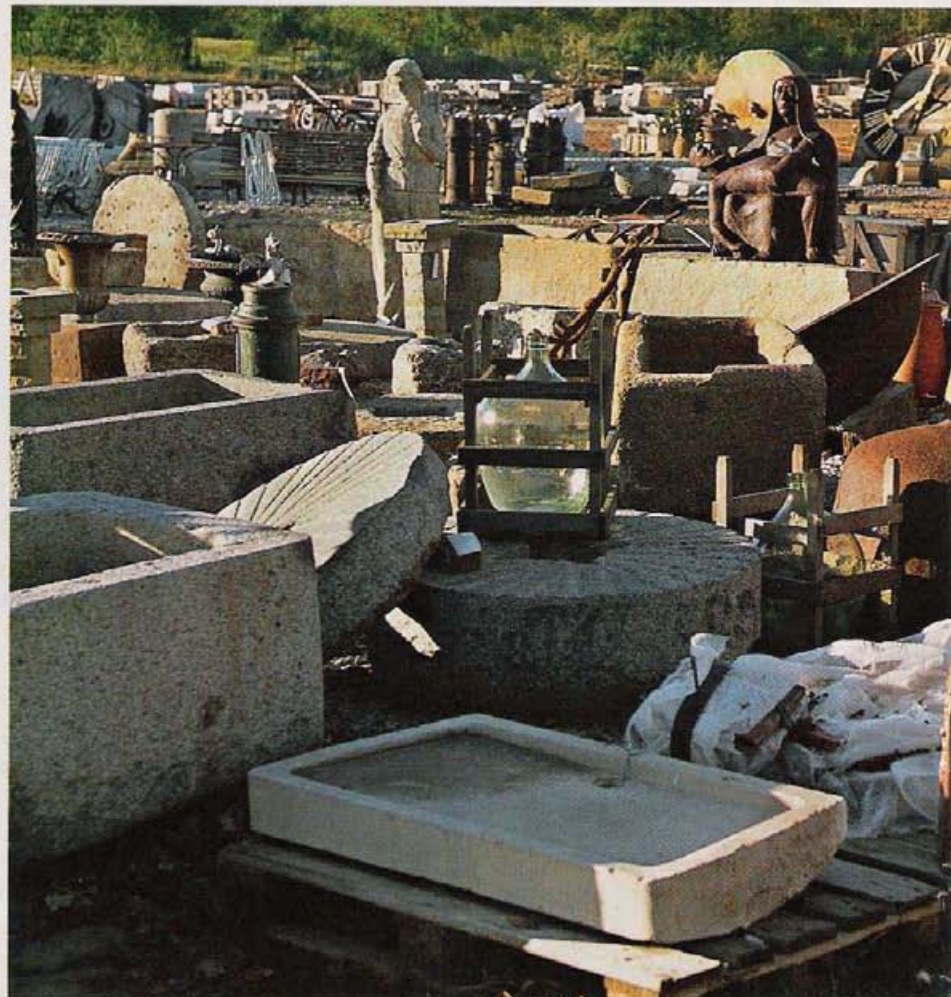
Bo and his staff—which also includes his sister Mary, daughter Alena, and talented woodworker Joe York—tend to pallet after pallet of terra-cotta tiles and granite pavers. This shipment of 100,000 English roof tiles, headed for the home of a client in Florida, once covered the top of a school. That huge clock comes from a town where it was the centerpiece in the square.

The dozens of iron chimney pots, some of them shaped like rooks and other chess pieces, once adorned roofs all over the western part of Europe. There's a somewhat randy story behind that stone olive oil press, which Bo figures will become a pedestal for a glass-top table. In fact, there's a neat bit of lore behind every artifact on the property or in the shop, and Bo knows it all with the assurance of the treasure hunter he is.

Listening to the Past

Bo handpicks almost all of the material he sells, making trips to Europe every four to six weeks to look over sets of roofing tiles, ceiling beams, or iron garden accoutrements. He ships about 50 to 60 containers back to the States each year. But he doesn't just strive for quantity. "Bo doesn't buy something unless it has a story and it speaks to him," Sherry says.

Bo started listening to the urgings of antiques as a young man growing up on the same family farm where he now displays his treasures. "My par-



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Bo Childs, co-owner of Wyatt Childs, Inc.

ents were collectors-turned-dealers," he says, recalling how his dad made him polish many pieces. "I hated it, but I guess I've come full circle."

For a time as a younger adult, he worked in banking, and then turned to selling computer equipment to banks. On a business trip, "I fell in love with the architecture of colonial America," he says. He bought an old post-and-beam house, had it dismantled, and moved it to Georgia. Working on that house, he bought tools for wood, brick, and old stone. The next piece of his development came as he made a connection with famed

Treasure Hunting

In September, Bo and Sherry Childs opened a showroom in a renovated farmhouse on their Barnesville property. "People love coming out here to the country and poking around," says Bo, surveying a barn-ringed field thick with thousands of salvaged items. "You never know what you're going to find."



left and above: The Barnesville farm shows off Bo's European acquisitions the way some farmers show off corn. Rows of paving stones, statuary, wine bottles, clay pots, and receptacles of all types invite customers to invest in remnants from the Old World.



above: Bo and Sherry Childs fill their Atlanta antiques shop with incredible European finds.

Atlanta architect Norman Askins and began working with him. More than two decades later, their friendship and business relationship remains strong. They're working together on a clubhouse at a golf resort in Ireland.

"There's nothing else like it," Bo says, enthusiastically describing roofing tile from the Himalayas, imported Italian marble, and French limestone. "You just normally don't see things pulled together with such simple beauty," he adds.

A Studied Eye

Bo's clients count on him to bring something out of the ordinary to their projects, whether they are building new mansions; renovating old houses; or outfitting restaurants, country clubs, or lofts. His search for antiques once common in Europe takes him into countless châteaux and salvage yards. Scouts help locate potential supplies, but only seeing and feeling materials himself satisfies Bo that

he's found what his clients want.

"I might buy something because it's the prettiest thing I've ever seen—not because I can make money on it but just because I can't bear leaving it behind," Bo says. "The only things I keep for myself are what people have given to me as gifts. Those are priceless. I sell everything else."

Acquiring the shop on Irby Avenue, across the street from landmark Henri's Bakery, allows Bo to bring a few select items from the farm into town and lets Sherry lend her own keen eye for accessories.

After all the hunting, buying, and shipping, Bo takes great pleasure in delivering. He likes knowing that his clients get just what they want to transform homes or businesses into expressions of their own tastes and tributes to artisans and craftspeople who created works of lasting value. "That's the fun thing for me—to be able to give people something to make their dreams come true," he says.

NICK PATTERSON

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All This and Millwork Too

In addition to importing antique architectural elements, Bo Childs does a thriving business with lumber, primarily old beams of white oak, heart pine, chestnut, and other specialty woods. Depending on a client's specifications, Bo mills the lumber for flooring, cabinets, walls, or furniture. He gets carpenters to build custom pieces from ancient wood culled from his frequent European trips as well as domestic sources.