

By Khristi Zimmeth Photos by Gene Meadows

# A PASSION FOR THE PAST

## Grosse Pointe Park home boasts one-of-a-kind treasures

When Marcia Wilk falls in love with an antique, she buys it – and then figures out how she's going to get it home. Sometimes that requires extreme measures (and the understanding of her husband, Dan). Such as the time she discovered a confessional door in Lebanon, Ohio, outside of Cincinnati.

"Believe it or not, Dan and I brought that one back strapped to the roof of the car," Marcia says. The door, one of many treasures in the Wilks' Grosse Pointe Park home, now hangs on a wall.

Adds Dan: "We once brought a whole dining room set back in a Chrysler K-Car, so putting the confessional on the roof was no big deal.

"I tease her that her motto should be, 'Where there's a Wilk, there's a way.' "

### ANTIQUe ASPIRATIONS

Marcia credits her late mother-in-law, Mary Jane Wilk, with getting her started in antiques – and, indirectly, in her career as the owner of a business specializing in estate sales.

"Anytime we were together, we would go antiquing," says Marcia. "If we saw a shop, we'd go. ... She never met an antique she didn't like."

Marcia bought her first collectible on one of those family forays about 25 years ago, while still living in her hometown of Pittsburgh. It was a small statue of Nipper, the RCA Victor mascot; she still has it.

"I always joke that Nipper is the only dog in the house that listens," she says. Marcia lives in the 1936 Tudor with Dan; their boys, Ben, 18, and Sam, 16; two dogs; two cats; two birds; and a turtle.





*Marcia Wilk is an antique enthusiast whose passion jump-started her career running estate sales. Her home is filled with everything from antique small furniture to desks and books.*

While she didn't grow up with antiques, Marcia says, shopping with her mother-in-law helped her refine her eye and learn more about things with a history.

It wasn't all smooth sailing, however. One time, she and Mary Jane both took a shine to a ceramic rooster lamp from the 1940s. Marcia lost. "As my mother-in-law was paying for it, she told me, 'She who hesitates is lost.'"

It took me a few days to get over it," Marcia says with a laugh.

Marcia, who through her business hosts up to 20 estate sales a year, now tells customers the same thing. "With antiques, you never know if you're going to see something again," she says. "The things I regret are the ones that I loved but didn't buy."

One thing she didn't hesitate about was her current home. In June 2004, Marcia packed up her family and moved from a

house across the street and two doors down.

"I had always liked this house from the outside, and told the daughter of the elderly prior owners to let me know if her parents ever decided to sell," she recounts. "I was going for a run one day and saw a Realtor outside, and couldn't get to the phone quick enough. We jumped on it."

"We loved the Tudor style, the expansive foyer and the beautiful stained glass windows. We even





*The foyer in the Wilks' Tudor home features original stained glass windows, a perfect complement to Marcia Wilk's antique décor.*





*The library is home to numerous collections, including zeppelin airship models and Wilk's first-ever antique – Nipper the dog, the RCA mascot.*

loved the original door knobs and the tile floor in the basement," says Marcia, who spent the summer they moved in on her hands and knees, scrubbing the red-and-white tile floors until they shined.

For the past two-and-a-half years, she's spent hours renovating and redecorating the 4,000-square-foot home, and most of the furnishings and accessories are unique pieces she's found through the years.

"For me, it's all about cool stuff and things you won't see everywhere else," she says. "Every mall in America has the same merchandise, but estate sales and

antiques really let you personalize your home."

#### **PICKING UP THE PIECES**

Among Marcia's collections are vintage textiles and salvaged architectural items from churches and buildings across the Midwest, such as a Stations of the Cross sculptural piece she hung over the fireplace in her living room.

"I'm not Catholic, but I was raised in a religious home," Marcia says. "I thought it was a beautiful work of art and something no one else would have."

Locally, she makes regular trips to Marketplace Antiques Gallery

#### **LIVING WITH ANTIQUES**

Marcia Wilk and Rick Matelonek – who with William Sosnowski owns the Grosse Pointe Collection, one of Wilk's favorite haunts – offer the following tips for living with antiques.

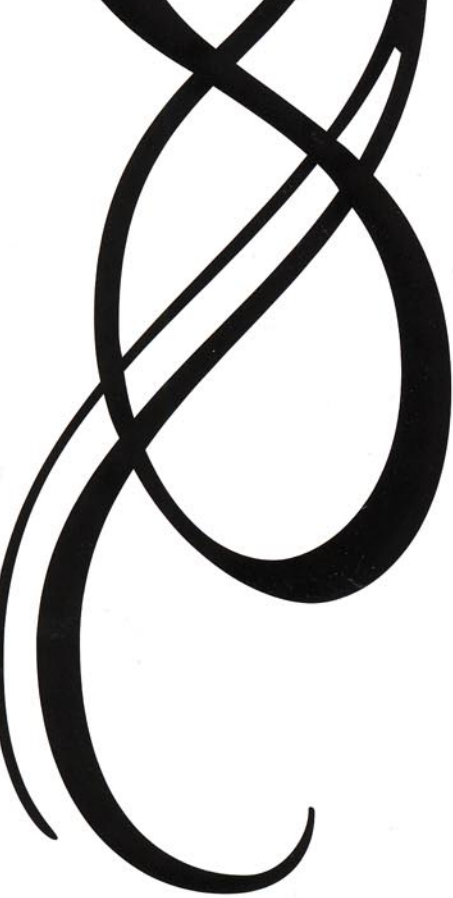
1. Go with your gut. If you see something that sets your heart to racing, buy it. The things you regret are the ones you pass by and never see again.
2. The best displays feature like items layered together. "Asian with Asian, French with French, tallest in the back," says Matelonek. "There's power in numbers."
3. Buy the best you can afford, and always in the best condition. Avoid fads or trends; traditional and classic items are perennially popular – especially here in Grosse Pointe.
4. Take items that need repair to a qualified, professional restorer. Antiques dealers are great resources.
5. Buy not only for investment, but also for personal pleasure – and don't be afraid to mix styles and periods. Mixing things you love – as Wilk does – adds personality to your home.





*A Stations of the Cross sculpture accents the mantel in Wilk's living room, which boasts a unique mix of fine antiques. Wolfie, her Westie, enjoys hanging out among the objects that all have interesting stories to tell.*





near Eastern Market, Park Antiques and Spectrum Gallery on Mack Avenue in Grosse Pointe Park, and the Grosse Pointe Collection on Mack in Grosse Pointe Woods.

One thing she doesn't do is shop her own sales.

"I never skim things off the top at my sales," she says. "I separate making money from spending money. If I took all the good stuff, why would my customers come back?"

She does, however, frequent other estate and garage sales, and admits to loving the thrill of the hunt.

Favorite finds include a cabinet in her living room she picked up for \$30, an intricate needlepoint of a French family crest she bought at Marketplace Antiques, and the eight Coalport porcelain dishes in her dining room she picked up recently for a bargain \$20.

Marcia has even passed the collecting bug on to her boys. Ben



*Wilk not only finds interesting pieces with which to decorate her home, she finds interesting ways to display them. A carved wood buffet and mirror, for instance, sit in the upstairs hall, with matching lamps and antique vases to add light and color. The arched doorways and wood-paneled doors are part of the home's original architecture.*

collects World War II memorabilia, while Sam is a *Star Wars* fan. And Dan? "He's a good sport about all of it," Marcia says, although his interests run more to sailing and flying than antiques.

"When Marcia brings stuff home, she'll ask my opinion, and for the most part I trust her," Dan says. "She has a great eye. I told her long ago that if I don't like something, I'd tell her, but she has great taste. I do have my own collections, and

Marcia sometimes shakes her head. My new thing is coal miner lamps. The only problem is, sometimes you run out of space."

But Marcia knows better than most that when it comes to collectibles, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

"If it were up to him, he'd have an airplane propeller over the living room mantel," she says with a laugh. "And that's why it's not up to him." ♦

