

LAURA WALKER BAIRD

Going Green With Global Home Furnishings

From a thriving interior-design business and Peachtree Hills antique store to a recurring spot on TBS' *Movie & a Makeover*, Laura Walker Baird's sharp business acumen and unique sense of style have been a formula for success. Now, along with her husband, Paul, and friend, Kent Schneider, Baird is going global. Her new Westside shop, Verde Home, which she co-owns with them, provides an international array of home furnishings that delivers maximum beauty with minimal environmental impact. You'll find South American and local hardwood furniture, organic upholstery, Southeast Asian accessories and, of course, Laura's signature European antique treasures. "We divide the space into distinctive vignettes to show clients how it can all work together," she says. That includes items such as 18th-century Italian chairs reupholstered in Vietnamese fabric and accented with hand-painted pillows made from reused cassette tape. "In addition to furniture, a major focus will be on hand-woven custom carpets from Nepal and Tibet," she says. Verde Home's smart approach is sure to appeal to Atlanta's upscale urbanites.

—Drew Brown

JUST THE FACTS

What sets Verde Home apart from its competitors? "I think there is less continuity in our product offerings and much broader categories. You don't often see reclaimed teak furniture alongside 18th-century antiques."

Who is your ideal client? "Someone educated and well-traveled who's interested in other places and cultures."

What was the appeal of the Westside? "A big part of our target market is the younger generation of professionals who are gravitating to this part of town. It was just a natural fit."

Are consumers demanding more eco-friendly home furnishings these days? "Ultimately, clients want something that looks good. But once we educate them about what we offer and what's out there, they get really excited."

What makes your furniture "sustainable"? "Most of our furniture is made from Peruvian hardwood that comes from managed forests, so there is no forest depletion. It's then stained to look like the traditional woods that consumers desire."

Since many people associate you with Italian antiques, would you say you have redefined your look? "Not at all. I've always advocated a very international, varied style, but pulled together in a way that's cohesive."

