

One-of-a-Kind Finds in New York City

By: Saxon Henry



Though it is famous for its glass and steel skyscrapers, these contemporary behemoths make up only one perspective of New York City. For another view, visit the time-honored antique shops and flea markets tucked into the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Given its status as the design capital of the United States and the home of the economic engine called Wall Street, shopping for repurposed items is often a peek into the lives of the rich and famous—or at least the upwardly mobile and infamous. If you think of your grandmother’s gold watch and chipped china when you think of antiques and flea market finds, you’ll need to adjust your attitude as you hit the sidewalks of this city.

Shops to Explore

One prime example is Mantiques Modern, a Chelsea boutique chock full of 20th-century furnishings and marvelous memorabilia. The shop was born in Westchester County just north of the city during the 1970s when a mother/daughter team founded it. They moved the store to Manhattan in the 1980s, connecting with Cory Margolis, who eventually purchased the shop, bringing in partners Kenny Felberbaum and Steven Perelman as it expanded.

“Most people come in and feel like they’ve discovered something amazing,” says Margolis. **This was the case for New York-based designer and art advisor Richard Rabel, who says, “You can find a petrified scorpion (in this case inset into a cool silver box from the 1950s) sitting under random objects that make killer sculptures, or oversized metal gears (awesome as decorations for a man cave) next to a 1960s Hermes travel bag! It’s the candy store for the creative grownup!” Rabel, whose blog *TheModernSybarite.com* is equally filled with eye candy for the décor set, is one of the savvy designers who turns to boutiques like Mantiques to shop for clients.**

The fact that Mantiques is frequented by movie-prop professionals may account for some of the eccentric choices you’ll find there. Furniture and art are featured in a variety of upbeat styles—and contemporary to mid-century modern are always in store. “Nine times out of 10, we become a secret weapon for the designers who shop here,” says Margolis. “We’ve had some of them tell us we’re the feather in their design caps!” Though they are known for mid-century modern, don’t pigeonhole them, he warns, as they bring in items from the groovy decades following the “Mad Men” era, too.

Just as many New York City neighborhoods have their go-to specialty cafés or fashion boutiques, many have a unique antiquing experience. Olde Good Things, known for its architectural salvage, has spread its presence to three Manhattan nabes. These shops are great for cabinet hardware, industrial yet chic furnishings and interesting architectural elements. The buyers for these shops have a sophisticated eye for primitive furniture and incredible accessories—from enameled letters and mirrors trimmed in antique tin to ornate glass doorknobs and nautical light fixtures.

Flea Markets to Discover

If it’s a flea market adventure you’re hoping to have, Karen Seiger, author of *Markets of New York City* and blogger at *MarketsofNewYork.com*, has a top five list she highly recommends: the Hell’s Kitchen Flea, one of the oldest and largest in the city; the Green Flea, on the Upper West Side of Manhattan; the East 67th Street Market, which offers antiques, as well as flea and farmer’s markets; Brooklyn Flea, which she describes as a destination market because it’s one of the new generation of flea markets with artisanal products and fresh food alongside vintage products and antiques; and Artists & Fleas, another of the new breed of markets.

The new breed of flea markets are unique in that “they bring small entrepreneurs and artisanal cuisine together to create a well-rounded feel to the experience,” Seiger says. Brooklyn Flea, for example, holds a cornucopia of new and vintage items. Intaglio Antiques brings antique prints and maps, which can be combined for a knockout arrangement of framed bird’s-eye views of the world’s greatest cities throughout history. Flux Productions’ cork purses and totes are lightweight and stylish, and Insiders1 purses and accessories make perfect souvenirs and Big Apple gifts with quintessential city scenes collaged and stamped on leather. Grab a snack at Pizza Moto, whose wood-fired oven travels with them to give their artisanal pies a smoky deliciousness.

Toma Clark Haines is an intrepid traveler who spends her time exploring the antiques scene. She takes shoppers on tours of storied flea markets around the world as The Antiques Diva (*antiquesdiva.com*). Stacey Thompson, an avid client, benefitted from her advice when she visited the Green Flea and sniffed out a vintage crystal chandelier she felt would be far too complicated to get back to her house in Missouri. Haines helped her get the piece home. “My chandelier arrived before I did and it was hung the next week,” she explains. “It is a showstopper when people come to visit!”

If the grand find seems too overwhelming to think about, the markets and antique shops of New York City have plenty of packable items. Think everything from small glassware finds, African tribal decorative items and a wide variety of textiles at The Antiques Garage, another of the venues produced by Hell’s Kitchen Flea; or beach-inspired pillows, kitschy jewelry, vintage clutches and beautiful candlesticks at the Green Flea. Be sure to check out the handmade soaps and fashion offerings at Artists & Fleas, too. “At least once a week something blows my socks off, and I’ve been doing this for four years,” remarks Seiger.



Flea Markets

Hell's Kitchen & The Antiques Garage

Hell's Kitchen is located at West 39th Street between 9th and 10th avenues and open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday year-round (weather pending).

The Antiques Garage is located at 112 West 25th Street (between 6th and 7th avenues) and open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday year-round.

hellskitchenfleamarket.com

Green Flea

Columbus Avenue at West 77th Street is where you will find Green Flea, open on Sundays only from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. during winter and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. during warmer months, regardless of weather. It has been closed due to blizzards only three times in 25 years!

greenfleamarkets.com

East 67th Street Market

This market is open rain or shine every Saturday from 6 a.m. until 5 p.m. at PS (Public School) 183 on East 66th and East 67th streets between 1st and York avenues. Proceeds from the market benefit the school.

east67thstreetmarket.org

Brooklyn Flea

Brooklyn Flea is located in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, at 176 Lafayette Avenue, in an outdoor setting from April through the weekend before Thanksgiving. It moves indoors to Skylight One Hanson, an event space in the former Williamsburg Savings Bank at One Hanson Place in Brooklyn, from Thanksgiving through March.
brooklynflea.com

Artists & Fleas

Located at 70 North 7th Street (between Wythe and Kent) in Brooklyn, Artists & Fleas is open every Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m. year-round. This market is indoors, and public transportation information is on their website.
artistsandfleas.com

Vintage and antique shops

Mantiques Modern

Located at 146 West 22nd Street in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan.
mantiquesmodern.com

Olde Good Things

Manhattan locations include 450 Columbus Avenue on the Upper West Side; 5 East 16th Street in Union Square; and in Chelsea at 124 West 24th Street.
ogtstore.com

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