

- listenN: Today in episode 11 I'm talking with vintage lover, shop owner and curator of beautiful things, Cheryl Gudz. Cheryl takes us on a journey through her love of mid-century modern furniture and design her passion for the hunt, what it's like being a vintage shop owner and the stories that come through the door and her joy for helping people bring beautiful design from the past forward into their working spaces and homes.
- listenN: Hi Cheryl, welcome to listenN.
- Cheryl Gudz: Hi Brian. Thank you for having me.
- listenN: Yeah, it's great. We're sitting here in your beautiful store in busy downtown Toronto. And so there's lots of noises and things that we'll probably hear, but I'm fascinated by everything in this store because everything has a story. And I'd love to start with your story around how you ended up falling in love with vintage things.
- Cheryl Gudz: Well, I think it happened gradually over time. That's the short answer. The long answer is probably just really appreciating beauty in design. And I think that started at a very young age. And I find myself being a very visual person. So it started early with like having a visual memory and recognizing that I do and that I can remember where things were placed, even if I can't remember what the item was called. So I feel like my interest in vintage just comes from being aware and noticing the shape and color and design of things. And so, as I grew older, it just became an appreciation of finally designed products. Um, and so it was probably my early twenties when I was sort of first living on my own and had to choose what would be my furnishings for an apartment, that sort of thing.
- Cheryl Gudz: And then I'd have to say that in Toronto I was able to purchase years ago, my first little studio, it was a little loft and that's when I realized, Oh my gosh, I am going to find all this great vintage teak furniture and I'm going to outfit this loft the way I've always wanted to. This is my space. And it started from there and my friends lovingly called it the house of teak. I'd have to say that was probably 10 years ago. And, my design sense has changed in some ways, but will always gravitate towards mid-century modern Danish, modern Canadian made at times. Uh, but teak furniture.
- listenN: Okay. So you say design. A love for design. I'm going to ask this heated question, create a debate. Have we lost that in our, like in other words, if you love design, do you find yourself just gravitating to vintage things?
- Cheryl Gudz: I'd say current and contemporary housewares and furniture design is still very influenced by some of the classic modernist design. So in that sense, I think there's a recognition that it was done really well that furniture makers in the 40's, 50's, 60's and into the 70's were crafting with a lot of care. And these pieces are timeless. They're functional. Um, you know, there's very much differences between a modernist aesthetic and Victorian or Edwardian furniture

style. So there's a lightness, a craftsmanship, and I feel like that's replicated today, but it just doesn't have the same authenticity because when you find a true vintage piece and you can sort of figure out a date at what time it was made, who was the manufacturer you can really find out a lot about it and then you can find out if they were making it for the masses or if it was crafted, handmade.

Cheryl Gudz: And those things just lasts longer. So what we're losing is the craftsmanship. But there are ways to use those designs, just like old architectural designs and replicate them today. Right? The materials, however, we're better than, you know, there are things, and I keep coming back to teak, but teak is not a sustainable wood to be growing and cutting down today, In buying furniture from the past, allows us to have an appreciation for it while not damaging our environmental and natural resources today. So there's that element as well that makes me feel good being a purchaser and seller of vintage because we do need to think about those things and there's a lot of pieces that remain in our world that are in great condition that we should be turning to before just buying new and more conveniently.

listenN: Yeah, when you mentioned teak, I think of that as, you know, if you're going to work with a wood that's expensive back in that day, you made sure you did something beautiful with it, right?

Cheryl Gudz: Yeah, absolutely. And the same thing too, like, so teak was used a lot by Scandinavian designers and that also came to Canada. But here we would make similar items out of Walnut. And so, yes, there were pieces made out of teak by walnut by maple. Then in South America they're using rosewood and but all of these, it's very hard to tell at times. What is the difference between a walnut, teak or rosewood piece because the grains are similar, but the woods could be local to that particular country.

listenN: Do you have a distinctive memory of when you were like, Oh I love vintage. Do you have a memory of a time where it's like, no, this is who I am.

Cheryl Gudz: You know what, I would probably have to say that the vintage is like what I feel most connected to like as a product. But, the idea and the sort of risk taking to open and operate a shop is also like a huge part of my story. Because it's not just about me, I'm trying to salvage and find pieces to help people out, outfit their homes and find beautiful things that have lasted a long time. It's also about becoming a shopkeeper and what that means because before my love of vintage, you know, which was really more of a maturing young adult thing for me. Like I loved the idea of operating a shop and when I was a kid I had a real interest and a real appreciation for Garfield comics, maybe seven, eight years old. And I thought that I would open a shop called Garfield's play house and the shop would have a bunch of toys. Most of it would be Garfield themed, but I like imagined it, drew it. Like there would be shelves of the books and digests and then large stuffed animals, smaller things. I always remember that as the first real idea of like, I think this is something I would like to do at some point. And

you know, even as a kid, just sort of decorating, rearranging toys on shelves, finding like the perfect way to display things. Then getting tired of how that looks, mixing it up again. And that continued through like teenage years, again with decorating walls, with posters or other framed items. And it just sort of grew into an appreciation again of design decor, visual stimulation and things that I really connected with. So in terms of becoming a vintage buyer-seller, um, that was just, that was the thing that I became passionate about because the collector in me wanted to find unique things rare things made in Canada learn a bit about how they are made and their stories too.

Cheryl Gudz: And so that was something that really kind of started in the 20's and I've just been doing every year just really naturally, I guess just going to antique shows, antique malls in small towns when I travel, seeing what the vintage scene is like, overseas and it's just become, yeah, a hobby and it's what I collect.

listenN: And is there a difference in, when you say the vintage scene, like for example, overseas, have you noticed culturally that there's a difference or is it all the same?

Cheryl Gudz: Yeah, it's funny because sometimes you really have to seek out the kind of vintage and antique market that will have more furniture because there could be a lot of clothing or artifacts, museum pieces, um, small, smaller little things that tend to be what I've found overseas. And maybe that's also because it's easier to set up at a market and some of the shop spaces are harder to operate in and run when you're like in Europe or Asia.

Cheryl Gudz: But, I feel like there is a difference and there's only so much you can really take back with you when you are traveling. But it is just sort of an appreciation for the local culture, ethnicity and the artifacts that sort of come with that. But I do find it to be a little more historical than what I can find here at flea markets and perhaps there's just a greater appreciation of pop culture and nostalgia for the fifties and sixties here. Whereas in Europe they're looking for older than that. But for us, we're still kind of enthralled with that period, the post war era of excitement. And renewed hope, but also very much the domestic bliss of what a certain family kind of looks like and how you outfit that home.

listenN: Yeah. And that's what I was just thinking about or you just made me think about, which is the concept of growing up in the 50's, in the 60's, you know, families were used to not having, you know, so there was these symbols of whether it was success or the perfect family. Oh, they had those glasses or they had that gravy boat or whatever. Right. And so there's this, this connection to, oh, I can now have that. Cause that used to be very symbolic of what people wanted to have. And so I go back to like toys when I was a kid, there was always the kid on the street whose parents bought them the latest and greatest of everything. And then the rest of us never had any chance of ever seeing these things. There weren't even stores necessarily that had them to go and look at. And so this kid was the kid that had the thing that we all idolized. Right. And so,

if I come across that toy now in a vintage store, I'm like, Oh my God I can buy it now. I don't have to ask my parents for it or beg them.

Cheryl Gudz: Absolutely.

listenN: You mentioned about being a shopkeeper and so that's a nice segue into a couple of questions I have for you around when you have a storefront and you are open to the public just coming in or walking around and a lot of people love to browse in vintage stores and then they leave. What type of conversations have you overheard, you know, people talking about vintage things. Like, have you heard any real gems like with people picking something up and telling a story about it to the person they're with?

Cheryl Gudz: Yes. All the time, which is so nice. And it's really, you know, it's a beautiful icebreaker with strangers or neighbors to hear people really connect or exclaim out loud or gasp and say, ah, that was my grandmother's set. Like we had these exact cups and saucers or serving ware or these canisters for coffee, tea, sugar and flour. This is what we had. And so there's really a nice sort of remembrance that happens in the shop and you know, the vintage Pyrex that I have. Like a lot of this stuff was available at the Bay, Eatons, Simpsons, all the major department stores, whether it was your grandparents or your parents who were getting this stuff as wedding gifts. Like there is a material history here of objects that you would recognize at somebody's home or at an aunt's. So there's a lot of that which I find really sweet and endearing, um, doesn't necessarily make people want to purchase that.

Cheryl Gudz: So, in that sense, sometimes they feel like, Oh, I exist as a museum of sorts. I've given people a nice sort of feeling as they walk around because I've presented things in a certain way and it's not like they have to sort through bins at a yard sale across it. Like, Oh wow, this looks so great. But also of course there are the people who do buy and appreciate and say, Oh look so much better here than it did in my grandmother's house. Or like I can imagine like this with my style now and I couldn't do that before. Why did I get rid of it? You know?

listenN: Well that's an interesting comment because it's exactly what happened to me when I came into your store and I saw things in your store that have existed in either my mother's house or my aunts and uncles houses. And everybody gets asked, hey, do you want any of this stuff? And everybody says no. But they come into a store like this and they are like, Oh, I love this. And it reminds them of something. And so I'm curious, do we require to not know the history of who owned something in order to want it? Do you know what I mean? Like I don't need to know who's kitchen those sugar and flour and coffee containers sat in. Right. But they remind me of my mom's, which I said I didn't want and they went to the Sally-Ann or to the Goodwill or whatever and were given away.

Cheryl Gudz: Yes. I mean nostalgia can work both ways, you know, can create fond memories. It can also remind us of things that were harder to work through or maybe we haven't been able to work through with our family history.

Cheryl Gudz: So I do think there's something to be said about finding things in your adult life that reminds you of the past, but that are yours. Like you can put your print on it and, you know what I really like this pho wood set and you know, my grandmother had like a bright red or a mustard yellow set and that's not really my thing. So you can appreciate objects I think, again, for their design value and then what you like as well. But definitely it is really sweet when people come in here and buy the exact same mixing bowl set that their grandmother had and two of the bowls broke. And I want them because they remind me of that. And it is really the nicest sort of feeling to be able to provide that and just have like a little quick conversation with someone about it.

listenN: Yeah. That's so neat. So cool. So, and then also having a store, you can have people come in going, Hey, do you want to sell this for me on consignment? Or do you want to buy this? And then they have a story about it. So, talk me through some of that experience of working with people around these objects that they cherish. They want to get rid of, there's value to it for them. They don't want to just throw it out.

Cheryl Gudz: Yeah. So I mean, luckily that's something that has happened for me since I've had a store for three years. In the beginning, of course I had to source everything myself and sort of stock pile to make sure that I had enough. But yes, now that I have an open door, people come in and they often want to sell me things.

Cheryl Gudz: So you sort of have like two clear types of people. There are the people who are like your pickers, like the TV people who love collecting. They'll buy full-out storage units or go around with a pickup truck and pick up things that are left on the street or given away. And then they come to you and they say, Hey, I've got this cool stuff. Do you want to take a look at it? Look in the back of my truck. And some of it is just junk. And some of it's actually really good. And so I've found pieces that way where it's really great. Again, it comes to you and you're like, Oh wow, this is amazing. I'm going to make them a little offer on this. Perfect. And then you have the people who are attached to items that belonged in their family, to their parents.

Cheryl Gudz: They're helping them downsize or there's a loss in the family. And so, that's another conversation and it's one that I don't do a lot of. Because consignment can be tricky. It's not always the right fit or again, after a few years of doing this, you sort of know what people want and what sells. And so the fit has to be really good. So I'd say I welcome that. It's been fun, but it's when you have a smaller space and you have like leanings towards mid-century modern furniture, again, retro 50s, 60s kitsch, it doesn't always jive with the people who have an estate to deal with and a lot of disparate era furniture. Um, but it is fun to see what kind of walks through the door sometimes. And some people are on foot again, the pickers with like a box and like, what do you like? Like make me an offer. And so I like that.

listenN: Well, I never thought of that. I never thought about the concept of going around and picking stuff up and then coming to a store like this to sell it because there's lots of times I'm gone by because that's the beauty of Toronto. You leave anything on your front lawn and within minutes it's gone if not a day. Right. So you're always seeing people leaving things out, especially things like vintage glassware and stuff like that. But I've never thought like, I'll look at it and think I don't necessarily have a space for that or need for that, but it's of value and you don't want somebody breaking it or you know, they ended up in the garbage. But I never thought about picking it up and then coming to someone like you and saying, Hey, are you interested in this?

Cheryl Gudz: No, it's really great. I mean it's a whole other side hustle that people can consider in lieu of collecting aluminum cans from recycling bins.

listenN: The concept of a store also takes me down the storyline of, you know, vintage being something that seems to be dominated by clothing. And so do you notice a difference? Like is there a difference in a vintage clothing store to a vintage, I mean, you have clothing of course, but you have very limited clothing and they're beautiful and they're not necessarily inexpensive, which a lot of people who do thrifting and this kind of thing think of vintage as I'm going to go in and I'm going to buy a jacket for \$5. So talk to me a little bit about the difference between, or why is clothing so accepted as vintage? You know, for every one store like yours, there's probably 10 or 20 clothing vintage stores.

Cheryl Gudz: I would say first of all that makes it harder to come up on Google searches, especially for a shop like mine where I don't want to call myself an antique shop cause again, antique antiques conveys more like a hundred years old. Um, and again, that's not the period that I prefer to base my shop in. Um, I guess I would just say there's a confusion at times when people just sort of wander into the shop for the first time. I mean the other thing to say about that is I also mix in new gifts and cards and stuff. So there could be a general confusion of what is happening in the store.

listenN: You lure them into the vintage?

Cheryl Gudz: Right? It's like the card shelves are the gateway to getting into your grandmother's basement or kitchen in the back. But, I think that creates, a bit of an experience to imagine like your own home and what it might look like. It's a mix of new and old things that you've had for 10, 20, 30 years. Things that were handed down to you. And so it doesn't look out of place. It's like, yep, I bought that book last week. It's a new bestseller, but it's on my coffee table. That was my dad's. So, in terms of the clothing aspect, for me, it makes sense to just, again, carefully curate a few pieces that I know have collectible value or again, sort of fit in with my theme, which is Canadiana. So, I've had some fun hoodies and sweatshirts in here from like Camp Muskoka or Bracebridge, you know, and just some older pieces like that.

Cheryl Gudz: Again, that, you know, bring that nostalgia and the same thing with blankets and other textiles and placemats and stuff. So, I always tell people who are looking for more clothing, a variety and sizes. Like absolutely. I can't do that. There's a whole area of expertise for that kind of buying, sourcing and providing people with real options. So, I have a couple of friends who have vintage shops and I sort of direct people to them because it's just like a record shop, it's an area of focus or expertise. You might have a handful of records in here, but you're not going to find that one thing you've been looking for for your life here. It's really just a sampling.

listenN: Yeah. And that was a nice way of describing your store is it does have a feeling like you're walking into somebody's home and that takes me down the road of the work that you do with people, um, helping them style their homes or bring some feeling of substance into their home and into their lives. What's that like working with people, helping them, because we've got the Maria Kondo's of the world that are helping everybody get rid of everything. And then we have yourself who's going to come in and help people maybe put some substance into their homes.

Cheryl Gudz: Well, I would say that's one of the things that brings me joy to reference. Marie Kondo is, um, I guess presenting things in a way to make someone sort of realize that it does look good, um, and that you can work with vintage and you can work with your existing pieces. And so just rearranging them in a certain way. Adding a color on the wall behind it that just really brings out, you know, textures and like materials. And so like for me, a big part of design and decor is about the appreciation of materials. So woods or woven textiles and or woven with wicker and rope into seating and chairs. And so I feel like people decide on their own, Oh, I'm not into Wicker or I don't like wallpaper. It's going to be too busy. But then when they come in here, they go, Oh, that one wallpaper wall. That's perfect. That's what I'm looking for. Just an accent wall and like amazing. Like how the wicker looks on this, like brand new, trendy, fun wallpaper wall. Like that looks so good. That's like the summary feel I want. So, you know, they're imagining old Wicker, my grandmother's entire sunroom was filled with 20 pieces of wicker and I don't like that. Um, but that's, I think part of the staging that I do in the shop is to help people visualize it, see it like a home. And always, it's the cutest thing when kids come in here and are a little bit confused and they ask their parents like, mom, is this a house? Are we allowed to be here? And they kind of love it cause they, it just feels, you know, kind of welcoming and then the parents are losing their minds cause they're like, Oh, they're going to touch everything.

Cheryl Gudz: And, and I am really okay with that. Once in three years, a child has broken a tiny little plate. So I have absolutely no problem with kids coming in here and exploring. But yeah, in terms of like, what I really love to do is working with people and helping them find the items and pieces and putting it all together. So I've done that a few times now. One for a friend who's a psychotherapist and was moving to a brand new office, really excited, a lot more space, more natural light coming from a small cramped room and now wanting to make that space

feel comfortable for her clients and a place where she can go and work as well when she's not meeting with clients. So, not only finding the right kind of furniture, the right proportion of pieces for the room, but also the right feel to make people feel comfortable and that was a particular challenge because, you know, if you're meeting with a therapist, you want to enter a space that's welcoming and warm and relaxing and isn't gonna trigger you as well.

Cheryl Gudz: So we had some really interesting conversations about the kind of art that could be appropriate without being totally, you know, empty hotel, you know, no character type of art. But, an old photograph of nudes is not gonna make the cut for therapist's office. So in one sense, like that was a really great project and we had a lot of fun. And, and now she's getting a ton of feedback even from her clients. Why that space is so much better. So warm and welcoming. She's like, everyone wants to still talk about that now, which is really nice. And, I could tell you another story too, if we had time about doing that with a restaurant and bar a friend on Gerard of finding specific pieces as well. But yeah, that is really rewarding and it gives me something also to go out and get, with purpose on the hunt.

listenN: So, let's talk about that. The purpose on the hunt. Cause a lot of times when people say, you know, this is what gives me joy and it is because there's a purpose that's being fulfilled that makes them feel, I think there's a quote and I'll plagiarize it, but also mess it up so it won't be real plagiarism. Um, it's something about that joy is what happens when you are fulfilling your purpose. So it's not like people are like, Oh, I want to feel joy. Well, it is, it just is a by-product of if you're fulfilling your purpose. So you're on the hunt. So there's a Hunter in there?

Cheryl Gudz: Well, I mean, any collector will tell you like, that is exhilarating. Like that's the thrill of actually finding that remaining piece that you've been looking for. In my case, it might be a Garfield collectible.

listenN: Well you don't have, I haven't seen any Garfield in here?

Cheryl Gudz: Cause they're all at home. Um, no, I have a modest collection and not a creepy room full of Garfield. Um, but yeah, that feeling of like, I have an idea of what to look for. I have the maker, I have this size. I, this is the feel, this is what the, you know, the person that has contracted me or asked me to find this for them wants and then just being like, Oh, this is perfect. I can't even believe it. And then getting excited, maybe when you make the seller an offer that they take and just like, yes, like, um, that is one of the great perks of this job or insanity. A self-employed, I don't know, but I, really, really, really love it.

listenN: What's the difference between being a curator and a hoarder?

Cheryl Gudz: Oh, a fine line.

- listenN: And how do you stop from crossing that fine line? Like your store does not look like those old, you know, vintage antique stores that you see around town with so much crap in the window you can't even see in and it's all dusty and dirty, you know, your store is beautiful. It's full, but it's not over full. It's not sparse, you know. So you obviously are able to stay on the right side of that line. So, but what's the difference in your mind between?
- Cheryl Gudz: I think it comes just from feeling a sense of peace and calm in a space. And that matters so much to me. So I'm so excited that my house is finally in order. I had so much clutter in there for a long time. I mean beautiful clutter. But it is something that some people, and I'm one of them, you know, we're personalities where I can't get anything done if it's too messy my brain just can't compute and I'm going to want to like clean this whole area up before I get on my computer and finish this work I need to do. So I guess I've approached that in a similar way with the store in that I don't want people to feel overwhelmed. And I do think there is beauty in so many of these pieces and you have to be able to see them.
- Cheryl Gudz: So digging through or, you know, getting dusty isn't my kind of thing. And I also think the pieces deserve better than that. So I actually dust and clean and wash all the glassware actually before I bring it here. And I think people kind of notice that, appreciate it. They can visualize it again. Yes, it's old, but it was taken care of. Yeah. I think it's more that it's not like, Oh, it's clean, but just that it's appreciated and it stands on its own and it needs, it needs that for you to see its beauty.
- listenN: Right. So it's not about just, the Hunter isn't just about getting it and hoarding it. It's about getting it and celebrating it.
- Cheryl Gudz: That's right. Yeah, absolutely. You hit that on the head is that, you know, like I could be buying entire estates or you know, I could be making those kinds of offers. I'll take all of this, you know, and doing lump sum. But, it's more, it is more fun to be a curator and also to be able to speak to those pieces because people who buy vintage also want to know why this is important or how do, how do you know, you know, when this was made or wow, it was made in Canada. So, curating helps me sort of treat every piece or every little group of pieces, with more care and attention. And again, that just translates to a better experience in the shop of me being able to tell you about how I acquired this, the story behind it. Which is a big part of it. And which is sort of why I ended up working in the shop 98% of the time and I don't have any employees and you know, I have an arrangement with friends or family to work time for me and I look after their cats or whatever, you know, like, because I can speak to the history of the pieces and I can acquire it. So it's, it's unfortunate because it would be really nice to have more time for other things, but when you're operating a shop and you sort of really care about all those pieces, it's also part of what you signed up for.

- listenN: Yeah. Like I'd never thought of the concept of curation as a hoarder, but like when you listen to those shows with the hoarders and they've got their basement full of stuff, they never have the story of the object necessarily. They have this sort of thing about I may need this in the future, but they don't know really why. And so I think that's maybe the difference. The difference is like, Oh, I might need this picture frame in the future, so I'm going to take this picture frame and put in my basement, but I have no story behind it. I just found it. I just have it or whatever.
- Cheryl Gudz: That's true. That's a good distinction. And I mean in some ways I appreciate that cause it's still about collecting in some way. And some of the hoarders still have a connection to what they're hoarding. And, it might be a huge collection of Blue Jays memorabilia, you know, that only a 10th of it gets displayed. Um, but yeah, then I guess there's the other side of just sort of bargain hunters and you can't pass up a good deal. And I think we share that. I think that's part of being a curated collector and also part of being a hoarder of like, I can't believe this Pyrex mixing bowl in great condition is, you know, \$1 at a yard sale, I must get it and I'll find somebody to give it to if I don't have room for.
- Cheryl Gudz: And so for me obviously I have the outlet of a shop. Like I've made this my livelihood, I can do that and I can collect all these pieces that are sort of regular, relegated as junk or not good enough anymore and find them new homes. So there's that obviously that compels me, but I feel like I'll still do that in the future. Um, when I don't have a shop, that if I find these amazing things and I know the value of them, they need to be part of me until I can pass them on properly.
- listenN: Is there anything that you've been gifted or given that's got a huge value from the past? Like has somebody done that for you?
- Cheryl Gudz: I haven't talked about the influence my parents have had on me yet. Um, and so part of like the collector in me comes from my father, who passed years ago but was an incredible music lover a jazz and blues vinyl collector. So in our family we have over 2000 records. These are incredible records, like first issues. He painstakingly collected in Winnipeg, that's where I'm from. He was well known in the collector community there and with all the record shops and everything. So an appreciation for vinyl is definitely there. Of course. Not to the extent that it was for him. Um, but the record player that belonged to him and now I'm starting to collect other record players as well. So I'd say that's the most meaningful is having a space and place in my home to listen to these records that meant so much to him and to learn a little bit about it on my own time unfortunately without him. But you know, when he was alive, I did get that education too. So it's all there. I'm just uncovering it again. Um, but yeah, the pieces that mean the most to me are definitely family pieces. I have a great, mosaic tile top side table that I use in my house and it was made by my great grandfather. He tiled the top himself and uh, installed, you know, these mid-century modern, skinny blonde wood legs on it and it's just the cutest table. But like I'll, you know, remember that he made it. So it's really special. But it's also

nice that the color scheme completely fits with what I love and what I've chosen for my own space.

listenN: Well, it's interesting cause I'm going to go back to the Maria Kondo kind of concept again because it's kinda tied into, uh, you know what you said about, um, a curator having a story behind everything. And I think that that's what she's doing is she's saying to people like, does this bring you joy? Meaning like, is there a story? Is there an emotion attached to this? And I think what's happens for a lot of people in this modern world is their house is full of a bunch of crap that has no story, that has no emotional attachment. And so when they go through the exercise with her, it's like, yeah, get rid of it, get rid of it, get rid of it. I'm down to like three or four things in my office now. And so I think that that's also what I'm hearing from you.

listenN: But it's like, no, there is a story. Like I'm not going to get rid of those records. They bring joy or that table. It brings joy because I understand the story behind it. And I think that, you know, I want to ask you about the consumerism of the modern day and is there a connection between the, you know, people sort of have an endless desire to just keep buying and throwing out and buying and throwing out where when they come across something vintage, it triggers in them. Like things can have a purpose and a meaning and do you know what that is filling in people? Like, do you?

Cheryl Gudz: You know, I've had these conversations in the shop and I try to tease that out when we're talking about why somebody loves a piece. Why or why they can't quite buy it just yet? Um, I think generally speaking, the people who come in here have an appreciation for vintage and wish they could outfit their homes or offices with as much of it as possible. So there's a bit of a regret for having chosen the convenient, cheaper way. And it's not just to blame Ikea cause like he is also making some responsibly made pieces now. Um, and not just, you know, the fiberboard stuff that we, you know, we know is terrible and uh, we'll break within the year. But, again, I think people need to see it in like, I don't know if I've got the mix right here in the shop. I know I'm not the dusty antique shop, but I'm also not the super curated mid-century modern shop on Queen Street East with nine pieces and they're all designer made from Denmark and they are multiple thousands, like, you know, I'm mixing in cheap old Tupperware and thermoses here with fine china and uh, sixties furniture pieces.

Cheryl Gudz: So it is what it is, but I feel like people want to be better consumers and we just kind of get stuck in the busy-ness of our lives. So that's sort of where I see the opportunity with where I'm taking my business next is to continue to talk to people about vintage and their space and wanting to love their space again. And the way that, you know, Marie Kondo has obviously an exceptional thriving business. There are a lot of people who do work well, helping people remove the clutter from their lives even if they're downsizing or moving or selling their home or apartment, whatever. But that's an opportunity to talk to people about what really matters to them and what pieces are worth hanging onto. Cause I think we don't necessarily have enough time with the busy-ness of our lives and

families to take that time, but it helps to have someone sort of work with you through that and say, no, let's keep, let's keep this, this one piece of art that means a lot to you and let's put it in a new frame. If you hate the frame, like, you know, this is just sort of someone seeing it differently and seeing how it could work that people need a hand with sometimes.

listenN: Yeah. No, it seems to me like a wonderful service that you offer that's unique that a lot of people wouldn't know exists even where you come into their home, like you say, and you're able to see things in a new light and, and give them some validation on like, yeah, you know, there's a reason why you like that. My mother's house we're moving things out of it right now because she's in a home and there are some paintings but it was back in the day when everything was small. Do you remember it? Like my grandmother's stuff and so like I look at them and I like that picture. And there's an emotional memory attached to it, but you're right, it's just the frame. And if I put it in a bigger frame and put some matting around it, I'd probably go like, oh, this is a great piece of art. But I don't, I've never until you just said it now thought, Oh, I could do that with those.

Cheryl Gudz: Absolutely. And so it's again, kind of like any service where you just need someone who thinks about that one thing way more than anything else to sort of nudge you. I mean, you know, I've obviously had a naturopath in the past and I seek out different health practitioners, you know, try new things. Or if you think about working with a dietician, like so many of us know what we should be doing or should be eating, but you honestly need someone to work through that with. And you also just kind of like have to put the time aside to do that. So obviously if you make a meeting with someone and you're just going to talk about your diet or your health, like you are locked in and you're doing that, but the same thing can happen about your space. Like, and it shouldn't be, it shouldn't be something, you know, that shameful like, Oh gosh, like you walked into my house and it's full of this and I'm sorry like there is so much, uh, that we carry about that, but it honestly, um, you know, is just the greatest thing when you can help someone with that and have a conversation about like, yeah, what makes you happy.

Cheryl Gudz: So definitely would encourage, continue watching shows like Marie Kondo, I think she does a wonderful job in and less of the shows about income property and uh, you know, they're fine. You can learn a little bit about contracting and design of course too. But it sort of loses the heart and character of like what makes a home homey.

listenN: Yeah, this constant renovation. Gut it and throw it out and move on. You know, whenever you watch those shows, they always have that big bin and they just keep throwing stuff in and you're like that sink was pretty vintage. Cool. Right. It's like, no one else will like that. Like, Oh, just off it goes. I mean, on a side note, that's like the ReStore concept where you go in there and you'll see these entire kitchens that have been torn out of rich people's houses and it's gorgeous. And meanwhile it's just sitting here or doors like really thick, beautiful wood doors and all this stuff that just ends up in the landfill.

Cheryl Gudz: It's so true. Actually, it's funny that you say that because I've only been to a couple of salvage auctions and the most recent one was a beautiful rich person's home. And they had the foresight like, yeah, we're gonna sell our house, but there's still value in these pieces. And some people will know what to do. They'll take down all this custom cabinetry. We had built in here 50 years ago. And so I was there to acquire three wood indoors for a dollar, you know, and it's just amazing. Like if I hadn't bid on them, I guess they would have been no bids and it would just be junk. And like, yeah, it's a lot of work to go, and then like find a way to transport three wood doors and just like, it's completely worth it.

Cheryl Gudz: It's about the materials that were used 50, 60 years ago and the craftsmanship about it and they just can't compare to like our Home Depot MDF doors that are the common, you know, you just hit the door wrong and you've got a crack in it immediately. Like you could just kick through it. So, yeah, that was worth it for me. And I am always really glad when people realize like, well we might have to demo this home, but let's give people an opportunity to save this cabinetry and reuse it. It's fun.

listenN: One of the other things that comes up for me when I look through vintage things is, you know, pre plastic. You know, like how we were able to make things before we had plastic, everything. And you look at things made out of metal or glass or tin and you're just like, wow. Like that was so interesting. The fabrication of these things. That's the part that I find interesting is just because I have a little bit of an aversion to the access of plastics that we're using an absolutely everything that doesn't need to necessarily be made from plastic, but it's made because it's cheaper.

Cheryl Gudz: Absolutely. Well, I think, you know, again, cause I specialize in mid-century furniture, um, people's homes and their housewares included like fine china and ceramics and porcelain and materials that were passed down to them. Um, but then as well, the consumerism there of like, not only do you need a toaster, you know, now you need a little coffee maker and a little desk. And so there was like the consumer push for sure in that period. But, I do have to say the disposability of products today is really upsetting and is something that we really need to pay attention to and people are wising up to single use plastic bills and proposals and bylaws that are coming soon. You know, here are really, really welcome and necessary, you know, uh, and even if people are distilling it down to the plastic straw or the plastic water bottle like that is great.

Cheryl Gudz: But yes, also the other plastics, you know, the Dollarama plates and stuff that, you know, just constantly turning out and people use for events and then nobody wants to keep them because the value is so low on that. And we have to think about the value of items and not being also afraid to use nicer items when we have parties and host people. That's okay to. To use these pieces and they will have a shelf life. Don't use your favorite pieces if you're worried they're going to get broken but still to use finally made products for that everyday living is what we should be aspiring to and not thinking is especially the one time crappy event. Whenever I'll just buy a plastic tablecloth for you know, like, no.

Cheryl Gudz: Um, but I do want to make a little note about plastics because some of my favorite things from the fifties and sixties were made of plastic, but it was like an Acrylic or a Lucite you know, the table was a waterfall and nesting table set was made out of Lucite. I was just like, Oh, that's so cool. You know? But then of course these things were made to last. This is not disposable plastics, but some of those materials there were some like really ground-breaking designs because they were able to see plastic in a different way and people were so excited about plastics postwar era for sure.

listenN: So, who are some of your favorite designers?

Cheryl Gudz: I have a few. It's almost more like for me, it's not about the designer, it's about the end product. So there are some pieces I have that I'm not even sure who designed it, but I love what they've done.

Cheryl Gudz: So I'm not a purist in the sense of like, you know, this chair must be original Charles and Ray Eames, you know, like some, so Eames is the biggest name, probably in modernist furniture making. And Charles and Ray were a couple who designed together and many of their products are still being made by Herman Miller and many copies and duplicates exist by other furniture makers. So I'd say Eames was important to me because I got a copy of the famous Eames lounge chair, which you, it may not come to mind immediately when I say that, but you've seen a million times on TV and in film it's the classic sort of lounge chair where you might smoke a pipe and you've got the Ottoman piece to it and it's got molded wood backing in a leather chair and it's a, Oh, it's just gorgeous. Um, so those retail for like \$10,000 now, but you can find vintage pieces that are also in great condition and their value is also super high.

Cheryl Gudz: You can be paying \$4,000 or \$5,000 for that. And so one of my first pieces when I outfitted my little studio loft was a replica Eames chair, which you know, was a great find and deal for me is when I was in my late twenties and I loved it so much. And you know, I don't think it was leather, it was like a brown vinyl and it was super scratched up. But I loved it so much and I basically wore it out. So I guess Eames is number one. And then I would say there is the Danish designer Finn Juhl, who also was really important to Scandinavian furniture design. And when I was in Copenhagen a few years ago, it was like maybe one of the most magical moments that probably spurred on the creation of my store, was being able to go to the Danish Furniture Design Museum, that they have an actual museum where you walk through and see all of these beautiful pieces of work and every piece has a name plate and you can appreciate it and learn who made it, when, what year, what manufacturing house, the different upholsteries my sister and I went to that and I, yeah, I think about it still way more than that I think is probably a healthy amount, but I really loved that experience and so, yeah.

Cheryl Gudz: Yeah, I'd say Finn Juhl would be another influential designer in my taste. And it's a little, it's a little harder to find Canadian designers. It was really more the manufacturing houses and they would often work with Scandinavian designers

that they would bring them in and kind of help teach in a sort of master apprentice kind of way, how to make those pieces here. Um, so unfortunately there's not too many Canadian furniture designers that I would name. Um, but a fun brand that I've carried in the shop a lot was the Imperial Manufacturing Company based in Stratford, Ontario. And there's a bunch of pieces that you can trace to Imperial and that they're written about in Canadian design books. Um, and so that history was kept and gathered. Um, but yeah, I'd have to say like, apart from the design exchange group here in Toronto, and a few books that they've put out, it's a lot harder to find our Canadian design heroes, um, which just haven't been idolized the same way. And of course they were influenced by American and European greats before them.

listenN: And sometimes it's just a matter of us acknowledging that Canada's still a young country and so we haven't necessarily invested acknowledging our sort of uniqueness or, so, yes, they might've worked with a Danish designer, but they had their flare. They did something different, but we haven't yet owned it.

Cheryl Gudz: That's right. Absolutely.

listenN: Because a number of years ago when I was in the restaurant business, in the last restaurant that I ever worked in Toronto was called Metropolis. And it was based on the concept of Canadian cuisine. And at that time nobody knew what Canadian cuisine was. And we were written up in the New York Times. We were hugely, hugely successful. But it was just fascinating to see, you know, what's Canadian cuisine? And then when you start to label it and people go, Oh yeah, right. That's Canadian. So, you know, maybe that's going to happen. And that you'll see people start to put words to it, language to it a description to these designers who, yes, they took an American designers idea or a Danish designers idea, but they put their own twist to it. And that twist is the Canadian design.

Cheryl Gudz: Absolutely. And you know, and just hearing you talk about that reminded me of one company in Montreal, that was fairly prolific in the late 60's and they were called RS Associates and they were tasked with designing a lot of furniture for Expo 67. And, those pieces are still circulating and I've sold some in the store. I have a couple at home that I will never sell. And RS Associates is a little bit of a brand name that is a tiny bit more of a household name here in Canada. So I would definitely want to reference them. And one of the most amazing shop happenings was when a small family came in here and they were looking around, they were really interested in everything. And then they got to the back of the store where they saw a couple of RS Associates tables and they were a younger couple, you know, in their 30s or 40's with a father who was, you know, in his 70's or so. And he started crying cause he used to manufacture those tables in Montreal and he hadn't seen them in years. And it just brought back all of this feeling and this job, I was like, Oh my gosh. And, and so they were explaining to me how much that meant to him. And he used to make these tables and it was just, yeah, just the best moment, um, to experience and like a real pride in Canadian ownership over something that you made by hand. Oh yeah. It was a beautiful moment.

- listenN: That is, that's so nice. Wow. So on that note, how do people, if they want to learn more about your shop or yourself, how do they, how do they get in touch with you?
- Cheryl Gudz: Well, come to the shop first. That's a fun way to just start talking and get to know each other. But, um, you know, I'm on all the social media and I really love Instagram as a vehicle to, you know, put photographs of all of these great items out into the world and then people can search for them. So yeah, I would say, if you can't get down to the shop just to follow my shop name is of course, Southwest, Northeast and you can find that handle on Facebook or Instagram and a great way to just message each other. And of course I have email and all of that is searchable on Google of how to contact me. I have a website as well, so,
- listenN: Well, you're obviously very confident in your Google search.
- Cheryl Gudz: Yeah. It took three years to finally get up there. But it's not that there's not too many other companies called Southwest, Northeast, but I know a lot of people understandably so can mix it up with like, you know, Northwest, Southeast, a concert. But you know, just throw Toronto in there and you'll find it.
- listenN: I really appreciate you taking the time to chat with me today. It's been great sitting in your space here and just looking at all of these really amazing pieces and learning about the passion behind them. So, Cheryl, thank you so much for your time.
- Cheryl Gudz: Oh, thank you Brian. It was really fun talking with you about this work and these pieces. And I want to ask you, because I'm just curious about any pieces that have significance or meaning to you that you have in your own collection.
- listenN: Well, I grew up in Vancouver and I moved to Toronto and so it was hard to bring things with me, I brought very few things. Um, but there's two stories I'll tell you. One is the story of the stuff that didn't get away, which is I brought some vinyl records with me and that was even at a time when I didn't have an ability to play them. Because I grew up at a time where that was what you spent your money on and that's what you spent your time doing. And so Vancouver is a very rainy city, North Vancouver's Rainier. Lynn Valley's the rainiest and that's where I grew up. And so I spent a lot of my weekends just looking out the window in the pouring rain, not being able to go outside and listening to music.
- listenN: And so those vinyl records, and they're not, you know, they're not jazz records, they're not, they're not famous collector items, but they're still very connected to my youth. And because I'm the youngest of four, they're sort of a little eclectic because siblings had all the popular stuff. So I didn't go out and buy the same album as my brother for example, cause I could listen to his. So I bought the kind of eclectic kind of stuff. So when I look back at it now, it's kind of

interesting how it's kind of a little bit on the fringe. Um, you know, for example, like 10 CC, I had all of their albums.

Cheryl Gudz: I have no idea who they are.

listenN: Exactly. Exactly.

Cheryl Gudz: But that sounds like the good stuff.

listenN: Yeah. And you know, and so it's sort of weird to not have, you know, all of the Bob Dylan albums and all the other albums and the Beatles albums. But my siblings had all that. And then recently, the one that got away was, I was in the backyard of my mother's house a number of years ago when she was selling the house that we grew up in. And there was this copper pot, almost like a planter, but it wasn't, I don't even know, you know, I'm assuming it had, was for some sort of liquid in its day, cause it had a spout on the bottom of it, but it was this beautiful, big copper, almost like a barrel, but not that big.

Cheryl Gudz: Did it have a handle?

listenN: It might have, I don't know.

Cheryl Gudz: I might be able to tell you, but please continue.

listenN: Yeah. And so, how am I going to get this back to Toronto? How? I can't get it on the plane, whatever. So I was, I don't need it. And to this day I go in my backyard and I go, I wish I'd thrown that on a bus, shipped it across to Toronto and I'd have it in my backyard. Cause it was just a memory and it didn't mean that much to me as an object. It was more about what it symbolized for me, which was my home and my backyard. And so I would love to have it full of flowers here.

Cheryl Gudz: Absolutely. Ugh. Well I mean it came to mind because I had one in the store. It was probably smaller than what that sounds like, but it was a coal scuttle. People hung onto them, but they are actually quite old and they make yes. Beautiful display pieces or planters. Now we don't need to collect coal anymore for our heating. Yeah. Maybe you'll find one.

listenN: I'll find one again. Yeah. And I think that a message that I would shout out to anybody, especially people that are maybe a little younger than myself, who are yet to experience that point in your life where you're dismantling your parents' home or your childhood home is do take the time to really think about a few things that you do want. Because you know, when you say no and you get rid of them, they're gone forever. And we talked about it earlier about the, because I thought a lot about the fact that, is there a need to not know who owned it in order to want it? But, I loved your story about your grandfather's table, the mosaic table. Like, yeah, if you can just take it and keep it, it can add a lot of

richness to your space. And, it's a story. It's a conversation starter. People come in, Oh, you know, I love your mosaic table. Well now you get to talk about your grandfather.

Cheryl Gudz: Absolutely. And the other side effect of that is it makes you think, Hey, I could make my own table too. We don't have to be furniture makers who were properly trained, my great grandfather wasn't. Again, it's that sort of mindset of like, can I repurpose this? Can we upcycle this? What will it look like if I just painted it? Can I find a way to restore it? So I keep it a little bit longer and it's that sort of thing I think we can do to have a better environmental footprint. So it's again, not just about collecting it is also just, you know, a question of ethics today.

listenN: Yeah, absolutely. Well, on that note, I will thank you so much for your time and we'll hopefully get to chat again soon.

Cheryl Gudz: Yeah. Any time. Thank you Brian.

listenN: You're welcome. Bye bye.

Cheryl Gudz: Bye.

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