

Vintage Shops London: Featuring More than 50 Vintage Shops, Markets and Stalls

Michelle Mason

Pimpernel Press (May 6, 2021)

Softcover \$18.95 (144pp)

978-1-910258-99-6

Designer Michelle Mason, the cofounder of the East London vintage shop Mason & Painter, delivers *Vintage Shops London*, a thorough introduction to where savvy shoppers can find “pre-loved” bargains.

Secondhand shopping is a win-win: not only is it “an antidote to throwaway culture,” as Mason asserts, it’s also a way of supporting independent businesses. Plus, it allows customers to furnish their homes and wardrobes with unique and inexpensive goods. The book details the locations, opening hours, and range of products of each of the stores it covers. Vintage markets sell a little of everything, while different shops might focus on records, porcelain dolls, or chandeliers.

Beyond fashions, glassware, and bric-a-brac, there are unexpected specialties. Straw London’s baskets, hats, and bags are all made of straw, while Town House in Spitalfields trades in hand-decorated pottery from France. Bibliophiles are well catered to with secondhand book vendors on the famous Charing Cross Road and Word on the Water, a bookstore barge.

Divided by geographical district, the book is an ideal resource for planning a day trip. Some businesses have a tea or coffee shop attached, so it’s easy to schedule breaks. Mason sprinkles in insider knowledge and tips. For instance, Tin Tin (part of Alfies Antique Market) supplies the cast of *Downton Abbey*. “Be warned, this shop doesn’t do minimal,” she notes about Past Caring.

The book features inviting photographs of a mixture of memorable facades (secondhand furniture warehouse Vintique London is set in an old railway arch), interior scenes, and close-ups of stock. There is a balance between overview shots and details, like a rack of tied-up rugs or a display of butterfly brooches. The book closes with ideas for creating displays, grouping similar things together, and using vintage linens as backdrops.

Vintage Shops London is an eye-catching tour through the capital’s secondhand emporia.

REBECCA FOSTER (May / June 2021)

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