

# a world bazaar

**YVONNE JEAN RABIE AND DANIEL CARRANZA TREK THE GLOBE, STOCKING THEIR NEW ROCHELLE SHOP WITH RARE AND BEAUTIFUL FINDS.**



Yvonne Jean Rabie and Daniel Carranza amid their wares in Ethnika Home Décor & Antiques, the shop they opened in 2007.

**S**he's a Lebanese Brazilian with expertise in textile history and an eye for interior design. He's an Argentinean with a black English ivy cap worn at a tilt, whose paintings have been exhibited internationally. Now Hartsdale residents, Yvonne Jean Rabie and Daniel Carranza met in Brazil 15 years ago, married in Scarsdale three years later, and have been travelling the globe together since, seeking out rare and worthy home furnishings and accessories to bring back to the States. Their purchases can be found at Ethnika Home Décor & Antiques, their 3,000-square-foot store in New Rochelle, which is chock full of the results of their wide-ranging aesthetic sense and discriminating taste.

On a recent afternoon, I joined Rabie and Carranza, both 55, at Ethnika, where Rabie brewed Mei Jia Wu Longjing

green tea that we drank from delicate Japanese teacups. We sat around a 19th-century Brazilian colonial table, Rabie on a Brazilian country chair made of pink peroba wood, Carranza on an 18th-century wooden American school stool. Nearby, a low Mongolian table held a foot-tall stone Buddha from Tibet, a bowl made of Peking glass, and a pair of Venetian lamps. Beyond that were armoires stacked on chests, piles of Oriental carpets, cabinets topped with figurines and candlesticks, and Chinese pancake baskets full of mysterious objects carved from wood. The softly lit space vibrated with alternating colors—bright reds and purples, muted blues and greens, the sheen of brass and silver. Of the more than 10,000 pieces from all over the world, prices range widely, from an \$18 miniature bronze opium weight from Thailand to artwork worth \$50,000; all furniture prices are wholesale.



(Left to right) Vietnamese porcelain from the Hoi An shipwreck dates back to the late 15th century. A Tibetan Buddha head, quartz and crystal balls, Chinese porcelain and other treasures are displayed on a Cantonese table. A Korean Bandaji bridal chest from the late 1800s. French Art Deco bowl from 1920 sits between a pair of Murano glass lamps.

Perusing the shop, Rabie and Carranza began enumerating the origins of their goods. "Peru, Uzbekistan, Africa," she said, pointing toward one corner. "Spain, Japan, Russia," he followed. "There's a French daybed, and those small boxes are from Turkey..."

The list went on: India, Korea, Scandinavia, Iran, Papua New Guinea. Could they think of a country that wasn't represented? They were quiet for a moment. "Maybe Australia?" Rabie said.

The aptly named Ethnika, which opened in 2007, allows Rabie and Carranza to lead the lives they choose. They travel abroad several times a year to shop. "We wander and look, we find and we buy," Rabie said. As for their next voyage, they haven't yet agreed on a destination. "She wants to go to Indonesia and India," Carranza said.

She oversees the shop, whose merchandise flows onto the sidewalk when the weather is warm. Prior to opening Ethnika, Rabie spent seven years running Alkadim Art & Antiques, a store she owned in Mamaroneck that took its name from her family's antiques business in São Paulo. "From the time I was little, I've lived with such things," she said.

It was in the Alkadim shop in São Paulo that Rabie first met Carranza when he came in looking for a particular French painting. "We started talking, and we clicked right away," Rabie recalled. Carranza studied economics in Buenos Aires and ran an advertising business for four years. He moved to São Paulo to study painting, and there he, too, opened an antiques shop before becoming a full-time artist. Some of his award-winning oils adorn Ethnika's walls. A recent cycle, which focuses on the beauty of nature in an endangered environment, presents mythical creatures with human bodies and the heads of animals and birds. It was exhibited last year at the Chung Young Yang Embroidery Museum in Seoul, South Korea.

This ecological concern is reflected in Rabie and Carranza's commitment to sustainability in Ethnika's purchasing practices. "Anything we buy that is not antique is made from ninety-five to one hundred percent recycled wood," Carranza explained. "We are against cutting any trees."

Rabie is constantly replacing pieces that are sold with others taken from storage. "Every time you come in here," she said, "it's different." She pulled open a drawer in a nearby chest to reveal a set of jade brush pots waiting their turn to be displayed. "More treasures," she said with a smile. "We sell things quickly."

Among the oldest selections is a collection of blue-and-white porcelain dating back to the 15th century, part of what was salvaged from the Hoi An, a trading vessel shipwrecked off the coast of Vietnam. The newest finds are the Venetian lamps, made from Murano glass. "We're adding more modern pieces," Rabie said, "but not 'modern modern.'" Even when centuries old, her ethnic items make great accents in a contemporary space.

Those ethnic items comprise about 90 percent of the store's sales. "The other ten percent is American and European," Rabie said. "People want things that are different, unusual. Even in our home, I'm swapping some of the classical furnishings for Tibetan ones."

Rabie and Carranza live with his grown daughter and their cat in a two-bedroom apartment that, like their shop, is filled with acquisitions from their journeys. "I love to live with beautiful things," Rabie said. Visitors to Ethnika might even end up with a craving for something they never knew existed. But sometimes, Rabie said, customers are overwhelmed by the multitude of options confronting them. To help, she assembles items in appealing configurations, rather than grouping them by type or nationality. "I mix it up so people can get an idea of how to put things together," she said. Once, she arranged an elegant table with two chairs and a selection of ornaments. "A customer bought the whole setup, everything together just like it was."

### Ethnika Home Décor & Antiques

1 Portman Rd, New Rochelle (914) 813-8920  
ethnikaantiques.com Open six days (Tuesday-Sunday).  
ethnikaantiques.blogspot.com/

Susan Hodara ([susanhodara.com](http://susanhodara.com)) is a journalist, memoirist, and teacher, who frequently writes about the arts.