



The **CHARMED**

At home and at work, Chatham Hellmers beautifies Birmingham with her vintage chic style.

Life

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WALKING INTO CHATHAM HELLMERS' loft is like venturing into another era—or, more precisely, several other eras. While the library boasts sleek art deco lines and a bold canary-yellow chair, the living area speaks more of a vintage dialect, accented here and there with a modern lilt. In the kitchen, a classic bust sculpture sits atop a set of gym-style metal lockers, and the bedroom door is nearly hidden in a wall of old-fashioned art.

Although many things about Chatham's home could be called "striking," the most deserving of that title may be the artwork on her living room walls: oversized images of Alabama wildlife created by bullet holes from a .22 rifle. Her husband, Walt Creel, fired at each of the metal canvases until they produced an owl, a stag, or



Melting Pot

Chatham's loft is adorned with decor of all styles and origins, creating an eclectic space that's both cozy and chic. Whether it's a clean-lined bookcase brimming with trinkets or funky light fixtures dangling before a wall of insects, one thing's for sure: This is the kind of home where flea market novelties blend seamlessly with upper crust treasures.





an opossum. Even Chatham herself is the subject of one of these bullet-hole paintings. Her dramatically shadowed eyes in the image seem to hint at her vivacious personality, cutting to the side as if daring him to fire another one.

The owner of Charm—a boutique on 2nd avenue offering jewelry, scarves, bags, and other gifts—Chatham is living a dream that began when she studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. The school is located near the costume jewelry district, which proved a formidable temptation. “I’d go over there and tell them I had a shop, and buy gobs of stuff,” she says. “My college roommate and I were always covered in rhinestones.”

That passion for everything fabulous carried over into the opening of Charm, where Chatham sells a variety of vintage finds, new items bought from the same showrooms she roamed while at F.I.T., pieces created by local artists, and even things she makes herself. As far as what she chooses to stock, she jokingly calls her policy “greed-based,” stating that

everything in the shop must be something she loves in case she gets stuck with it.

As previously mentioned (remember the bullet-hole artwork?), Chatham’s unique style extends to her home. She describes her loft’s decor as “extravagantly expensive knickknacks next to some trash pulled in from the side of the road.” This, she says, is a result of her tendency to impulsively acquire interesting items, whether she encounters them by accident or seeks them out purposely. “I have hoarded things like a crow since forever,” she says. “Then [I] stepped up the game at age 21, when I went to my first antique auction.”

In regard to her personal style, Chatham tends toward basic clothing with bold accents. She adores outrageous jewelry, especially

Navajo squash blossom necklaces and enormous rings. “When it comes to style inspiration, I love Diana Vreeland, Peggy Guggenheim, [and] Iris Apfel,” she says. “Those grand dames prove that it is better to be interesting than to be beautiful.”



Winning Combination

For Chatham and her husband, Walt, an old set of lockers is the perfect storage solution for their plates and glassware. You don’t have to go home, gym shorts, but you can’t stay here.





True Love

Chatham's store-front boutique, Charm, showcases a delightful assortment of vintage, handmade, and local wares. Everything she selects to sell is something she personally adores.



Universal Appeal

Selling everything from vintage jewels to trendy handbags, Charm is the kind of boutique in which one could quite happily get lost for hours. Chatham uses a variety of props, like antique books and a silver deer head, to display her jewelry and other sparkling finery.