



# timeless treasures

Ella Benton is sharing her passion for vintage design with Mississippians as she displays and honors timeless pieces of history hailing from Europe. "I think objects from history carry with them the memories and provenance of the people who first loved them," she says, referring to her collection of more than 80

Swedish longcase clocks, which is believed to be the largest assortment being sold currently in the United States.

The Benton family lived in Europe for the past two years, until Ella's husband, a lieutenant colonel, was stationed at Columbus Air Force Base. "While antiquing through Paris, France, I discovered my first Swedish Mora clock in a dusty brocante, and I fell in love with the curvaceous feminine, yet strong, design aesthetic it had," she explains.

"As I began to learn more about these amazing old clocks, my love

affair with them continued to grow," says Benton. "I call these 'the little clocks that saved a village' because legend has it, there was a tiny farming village named Mora in Sweden that had fallen on hard times, and the people were starving. They called a town meeting to try and decide what they could do to survive the bitter winter. As they talked, they realized that they had families that were master woodworkers, and other families that were painters by trade, and still others who knew how to build clock workings. They decided to pool their talents and create the first Mora clock together. This began a cottage industry for the village that lasted more than 100 years. These beautiful timeworn clocks represent the best in people coming together."

Inspired, Benton opened Vivian Estelle Designs in Columbus, where she offers dozens of her clocks for sale, with prices starting at \$1,800. "The 'love match' between clock and owner is a very personal one, and they will speak to you like great art does," she adds. "They are not only incredible designer pieces for the home, but they are overflowing with a rich history of how they came into existence."—S.M.B.

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