

ACT II

Upscale Furniture Consignment Gallery features 'gently used' castoffs.

BY BELLA KELLY
Special to The Miami Herald

The Upscale Furniture Consignment Gallery in South Dade may be the perfect solution for homeowners with limited budgets but unfulfilled desires for high-end home furnishings.

On the other hand, for those who already have housefuls of expensive furniture and want to downsize, the Gallery welcomes "gently used" castoffs, not only giving them a second life but giving owners a percentage of the profits from their sale.

Opened a year ago, Rita Schwartz's gallery has become a high-volume consignment store, attracting so much customer attention it has doubled to 6,000 square feet literally brimming with ornate furniture, lamps, glittering crystal chandeliers, carved and inlaid antique breakfronts and bars, collectible porcelain, original art and one-of-a-kind designer pieces, all recycled at bargain prices.

If you've yearned for the \$22,000 Cappellini dining room table with 99 rope legs



'Spotted Fish' by Carlos Alberto, \$950.



Doulton 'Bacchus' Toby mug, \$85.

— a piece de resistance by noted designer Fabio Novembre — you can buy one at the Gallery for \$11,000. For an Italian leather sofa that cost \$1,500 new, the price tag is \$400. If you collect carved glass perfume bottles, there's one for \$10.

And you might even wind up paying less: "Everything in the store," says Schwartz, "is negotiable."

Schwartz is an artist who created signs and promotional material for Paws 4 You Pet Rescue, a non-profit organization for abused and abandoned dogs. She decided to use her artistic talents for a profitable venture and help the "going green" movement by being involved in recycling products.

The value of furniture the gallery accepts for sale is ascertained from original sales slips provided by the owner or from professional appraisals. If the furniture isn't sold in three months, the price is lowered every two weeks. If it still doesn't sell, it goes into the gallery's estate sale section at perhaps even a lower price. If it still fails to sell, the original owner has to retrieve it or the gallery will donate it to Miami Rescue Mission and the owner gets a tax receipt credit.

One popular item in the Gallery is what Schwartz calls a "James Bond" bar. Intricately carved, it appears to be an ornate wooden chest. But press a button on the side and the top rises to



PHOTOS BY PATRICK FARRELL/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

SOUTH MIAMI-DADE: Everything is negotiable in Rita Schwartz's Upscale Furniture Consignment Gallery, including a 1912 carousel horse, \$5,000.

If you go

Where: 8845 SW 132nd St., South Dade
Hours: 10:30 a.m. - 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday
Contact: 305-491-5651

expose hanging cocktail glasses with crystal bottles on a platform to hold wine or other beverages. Its original price was \$16,000; the gallery sells it for \$8,000.

There are coffee tables for \$150 or thousands of dollars. A bedroom set with headboard, footboard, two dressers, two end tables and mirror is \$1,200 compared to the original \$5,000. An



Fabio Novembre's glass Cappellini table, \$11,000.

1912 intricately carved and colored wooden horse that was once on a carousel in New York's Central Park is valued at \$15,000 but can be had for \$5,000.

Some customers decide

to wait the two weeks' pricing reduction to get an even bigger bargain.

"That doesn't always work," says Schwartz. "They come back and the item is gone."