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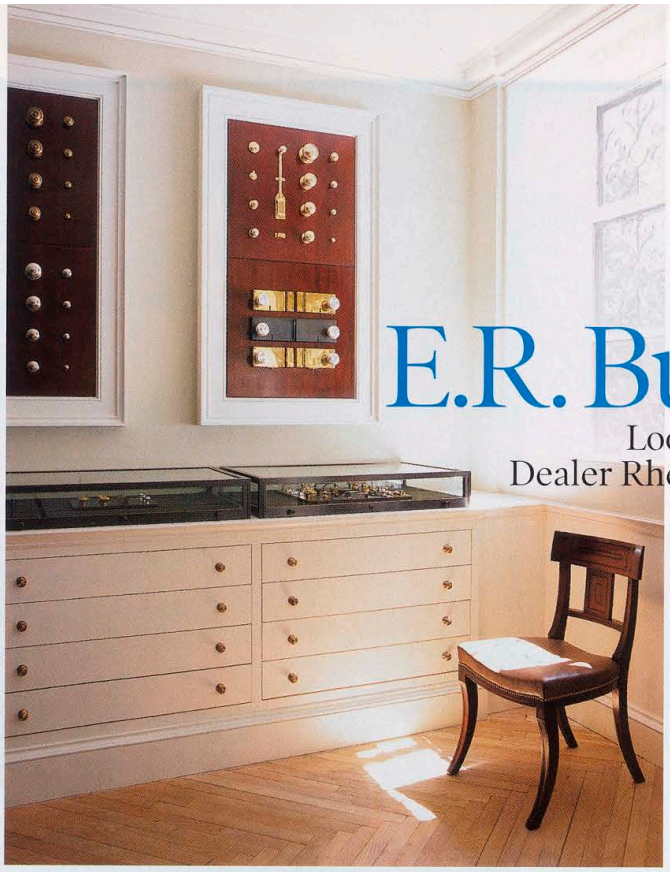


At his new Boston couture-hardware shop, Rhett Butler (below) sells an assortment of brass, crystal, and nickel doorknobs and levers. See Resources.

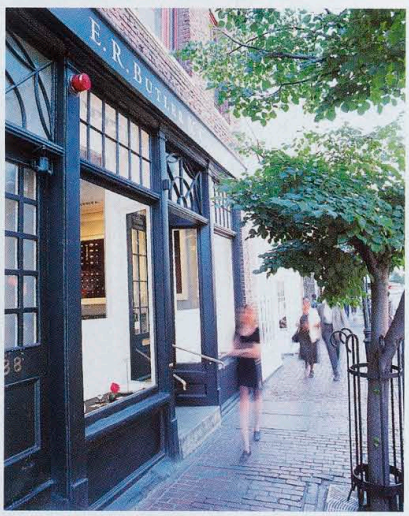
E.R. Butler & Co.

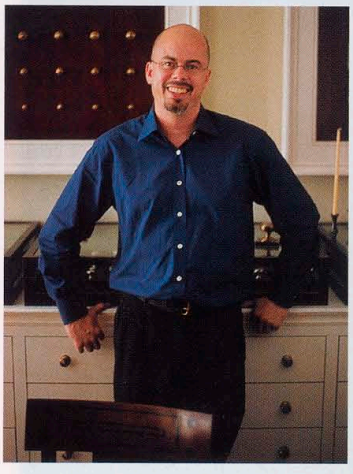
Looking for tip-top hardware in Boston? Dealer Rhett Butler's new shop serves it up, with knobs on

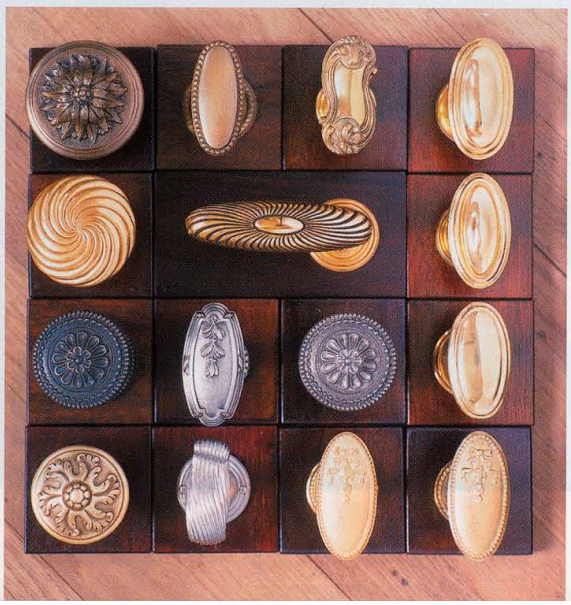
It took Rhett Butler only an hour to find the 1850s Boston storefront that would house his hardware and accessories shop, E.R. Butler & Co., and half that time to sketch its design on a cocktail napkin in a nearby bar. The result, a light and airy 3,000-square-foot space on historic Charles Street, is an elegant stage for the carefully crafted doorknobs and levers that Butler has sold in his New York showroom for more than a decade. "I treat hardware less as something you go into a dark store for and more as an aesthetic object," he says. "It can be an art form."

The original E.R. Butler has a devoted client base that includes architect Alan Wanzenberg and designer Thierry Despont, and the new store promises to become a favorite among Boston decorators, too. Its three rooms are outfitted with traditional moldings, chalk-blue and green walls, and Empire chairs. "Rhett was inspired by the 18th-century English country houses of Robert Adam," says the shop's architect, Gil Schafer. "He wanted to give it a neoclassical feeling." Butler (named for a relative, not Margaret Mitchell's antihero) extended the period motif to his product displays. After examining pictures of Adam's rooms, where moody paintings were encased in white moldings, Butler mounted his line of solid-brass doorknobs on mahogany boards trimmed in white for a similar effect.

Butler also sells jewelry and home accessories by Gabriella Kiss, Lee Hale, and Ted Muehling in his store. An unusual juxtaposition, yes, but displaying Kiss's gold snake hoop earrings alongside Vervloet's nickel replica of a Rateau door lever makes perfect sense to him. "These are all handmade or one-of-a-kind pieces," says Butler, who is planning to open an outpost in Los Angeles within two years. "I want to break down the barriers between jewelry you put on your body and jewelry you put in your house." LYGEIA GRACE







ERIC ROTH; PRODUCED BY BARBARA KURGAN