

THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ MAY 2017

LOCALS

Keeping the Lights On

An old world craftsman can repair any lamp

By FRANCINE BREVETTI

A CUSTOMER WALKED IN to the lighting shop on Divisadero with a vintage lamp from England shaped as a young boy flying. It had been crudely repaired. Each hand held a socket. The arms had been amputated to rewire the lamp, then glued back badly, with wiring pasted on the outside.

The Ukrainian impresario of Yury's Lights & Beyond, Yury Budovlya, took on the miserable specimen, detaching the arms and removing the unsightly adhesive. He rewired the lamp, soldered the arms back to the body, leaving the surface seamless and with a seasoned patina.

When the customer returned, she was so astonished to see her prized lamp beautifully restored that she erupted in grateful dance and song. Not wanting to offend, Yury mirrored her with a song and a dance of his own, thinking perhaps it was the appropriate American response.

Walking into Yury's Lights & Beyond at 1849 Divisadero is like stepping into a

forest of crystal: fixtures swinging from the ceiling, standing up as floor lamps, glittering on tables. And on shelves against the wall, there's all manner of lighting hardware and bulbs.

"I buy from auctions," Yury says. "Most of the lamps are from Europe, France, Italy, Spain and the United States. And 99 percent of my lamps are vintage."

For Yury, vintage means anything from the 1930s to the 1960s. That was the heyday of quality lamp making, he says. After

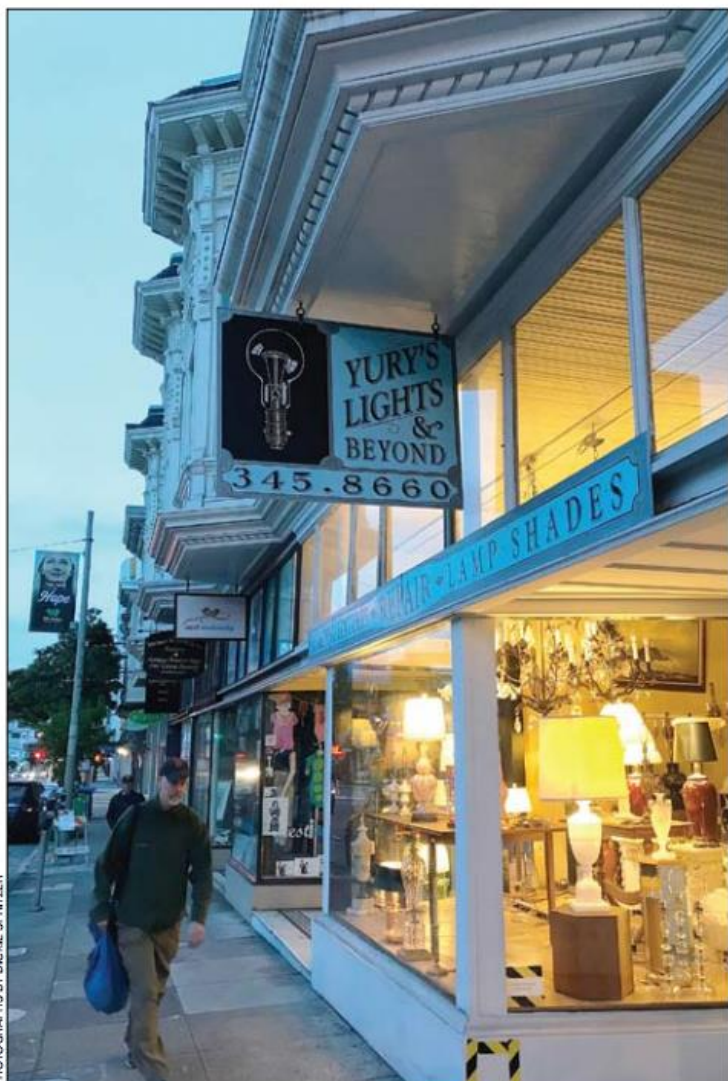


"I never overcharge, but I buy the best quality."

— YURY BUDOVLYA, owner of Yury's Lights & Beyond

that came the dreck from China and later Sweden — think Ikea — and it's all been downhill since.

Yury is an old world craftsman who promises to repair your broken table lamp promptly and hand it back to you better than before, all at a fair price.



Yury's Lights & Beyond offers up a warm evening glow of light at 1849 Divisadero.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DIANE SPRITZER



AARON LEE



CHESHIRE ISAACS

Yury Budovlya repurposed wine bottles to create lighting for Scopo Divino wine bar.

"I never overcharge, but I buy the best quality," he says. "New sockets and wiring, new insulation, sometimes new screws and crystals."

Yury works with both individuals and designers. Designers mostly know what they want, he says, whereas individuals come in with questions and walk out as friends.

"Sometimes people come to me and they can't afford it, so I say: 'What is your budget?' and even if it's \$20, I say okay, I'll fix it," he says. "I don't even take their name; just their phone number. And when they pick it up, I say: 'Fine, thank you. Come again.'"

Recently a woman came in to pay for a job done gratis when she was down and out. He wouldn't accept the payment.

The real money is in shades. He says there is a neverending hunger for the top hats of light-emitting devices. And he even makes custom shades. "Nobody does that," he says of other lamp dealers. "It's too expensive — like diamonds."

His plans for the future include bringing in more shades — all made in the U.S. — and more chandeliers.

Bring him a problem and he can't wait to attack it.

When Tim Hayman was opening his Scopo Divino wine bar on California Street

last year and wanted to create a unique decor, he envisioned lamps made of wine bottles. A block away he found Yury and enlisted him to repurpose wine bottles by adding wiring, hardware and bulbs. Today they hang from the ceiling over Scopo Divino's bar.

Alan Schneider, proprietor of Antique Traders on California Street, has been Yury's customer for more than 15 years. Schneider says Yury can do it all, including rewiring old fixtures and making new ones. "His knowledge is exceptional and his work is very high-quality," Schneider says, also giving the Ukrainian master accolades for attentive customer service.

Yury and his family left their home outside of Kiev in 1989 just as the Soviet Union was collapsing. The family did not emigrate for political reasons, he said, but he recalled: "It was tough. You couldn't go to the synagogue, you couldn't go to church." His mother, wife and children came to join his sister, who was already here.

He says it was the right move.

"I am very happy in this country," Yury says. "If you are not lazy and have a little bit of brain, a little bit, you can survive. This is the best country."