



man brothers, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Dawn Mellor. And then there are unusual objects.

In another home that he aptly describes as a “cabinet of curiosities,” he introduces objects as if they were to become friends (and even frenemies) and then layers the space with these juxtapositions to make it personal. This plethora, especially in the basement, deftly draws together historical periods and geographies, nature and craft, and disposable culture, high design, and art. The interiors of the four-story house were not shaped by design, that problem-solving practice; instead, the objects, furnishings, and artworks establish the function and character of each space.

“Pieces often speak to you, not about themselves, but rather about their future connection with other pieces or ensembles,” Zandberg explains. “The [more obscure] instruments play important roles in the symphony, but they are rarely allowed to play a solo. It is the idea of seeing, in your mind’s eye, the potential assemblage that makes a particular object interesting, rather than only its own beauty.” Like cooks in the kitchen, too many star objects in an interior may prove disastrous. The apartment in Rue Balzac—paying homage to a stage actor—demanded



With barely four years of age, the first career choice interior designer Hubert Zandberg made was to become a collector. “Collecting is a condition and you can choose to live it or fight it,” the South Africa-born designer says, using the French word *ensemblier* to describe his line of work. The word refers to a person who, in addition to being able to place objects together, can, through envisioning their arrangement, make the effect greater than the sum of their parts. The simplicity of this definition, however, is belied by the mostly instinctual choices that go into juxtaposing diverse objects and furnishings to create space that is garrulous or sonorous with personality.

In his own Parisian pied-a-terre, which the London-based designer uses for client meetings, trips to the galleries, and *marchés aux puces*, he gathers a myriad of objects in a small space: tables from Matego, Adnet chairs, Italian lighting by Sarfatti, a bronze vase by Rick Owens, ceramics, art toys, and contemporary art by Nicholas Hlobo, the Chap-

THE COLLECTOR'S DILEMMA

HUBERT ZANDBERG — PARIS [FRANCE]



a flamboyant scenography: an amalgam of the ornamental and the contemporary, Oriental prints with flowers and taxidermy. “This sumptuous nature allowed all the objects, patterns, and colors to emphasize each other,” he says, “and to complete the overtly dramatic effect.”

Zandberg came down with his collector’s “illness” early on, making his earliest finds on the veld in South Africa: stones, ostrich eggs, gourds, and shells. It is these “free objects” from nature that remain some of his most prized possessions. “I still use these objects to juxtapose with, and therefore highlight, other more precious and so-called sophisticated artworks and artifacts,” he says.

Whether for business or pleasure, his travels rarely exclude visits to an antiques street, flea market, or artist’s studio, from the Portobello Market to his own Parisian neighborhood, or Porte de Clignancourt to the Tiergarten in Berlin. Through visits to the latter he has augmented his collection of dice and kitschy bar accessories. Other haunts include the galleries around August Strasse in Berlin-Mitte, shops and galleries in Cape Town where he has roots, as well as Moscow, Miami, Rio, Istanbul, and Tangiers, where he doesn’t. Sometimes, Zandberg will visit a market with a list in hand of objects to find for various projects—and then find items he loves too much to let go: “That is one of the less healthy side effects of the

collector’s illness,” he admits. “I recently found a retro globe on a stand that I secretly asked the shipper not to ship to a client abroad, but to hide in the storeroom for me.”

To find his best “finds,” he explains, requires the aid and expertise of hundreds of dealers, finders, artists, and craft-people, who swell the rolls of what he, perhaps affectionately, calls “the band of hunters.” Here, he mentions Owen Hargreaves and Jasmine Dahl, who used to trade in African beads and artifacts in London’s Portobello Market and various pop-up events and fairs. He credits each with not only having a wonderful eye but with understanding the aesthetics of their various clients, which allows them to cater to individual needs. “Saturday mornings in London would not be the same without a visit to their stall where news and spiritual advice are exchanged and mad laughter ensues,” he says. “This virtually tribal gathering has a meaning far beyond simply negotiating a price and buying an object. The fruits of their African expeditions are littered far and wide across my projects.”

At times, the pieces he finds influence the aesthetic of the interior he is working on, but whatever the case, there is always a bigger story in mind.

“It is important to be able to associate your finds with a larger narrative,” he says, “which also, of course, means that one must become an expert in storing and inventorying.” In the Notting Hill townhouse that he designed for a close friend—a fashion designer with whom he has spent years grazing through flea markets and galleries—that larger narrative was their friendship. He told their story through a range of aesthetics, restoring elements of architectural heritage, integrating her existing furniture, and bringing in modern art, “curiosities,” and glamorous old pieces.

Once the object objects have collected, there is a certain *je ne sais quoi* in how he composes. He sees the process of putting objects together as instinctive with a little practice-makes-perfect thrown in. “It is the small choices that give you the thrill when you see the energy that suddenly exists between newly associated objects,” Zandberg says. “Therein lies the pleasure and the satisfaction.”