

CONDÉ NAST

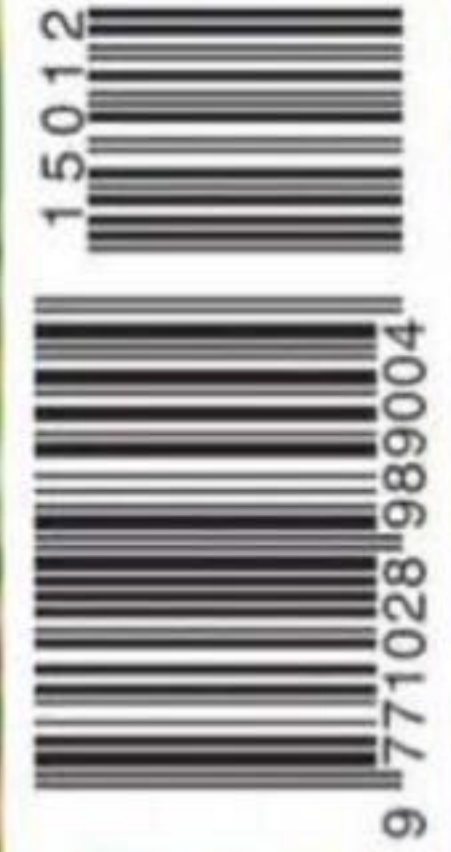
# House & Garden

SOUTH AFRICA'S FINEST DECOR MAGAZINE

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## BEST *of* the BEST

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NEW-LOOK BATHROOMS  
WINELANDS HOT SPOTS**



## LIVING SA STYLE

**INTERIORS  
WITH UNIQUE  
DESIGN APPEAL**

**ROAD TRIPPING  
THROUGH  
THE KAROO**

**WHAT MAKES  
THE PERFECT  
FORMAL GARDEN**



# all the world's a stage

A FUSION OF THE DRAMATIC AND AVANT-GARDE IS A VICTORY OF IMAGINATION OVER CONVENTION IN DESIGNER HUBERT ZANDBERG'S HANDS

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PHOTOGRAPHS NICOLAS MATHEUS

The sitting room forms the focal point of the space. The printed velvet cushions are from Sabina Fay Braxton and the wall-mounted sculpture is by Curtis Jere.





**'E**xperiment, really, is the operative word here,' says interior designer Hubert Zandberg of this tiny (it's barely 50 square metres) apartment on Rue Balzac, near the Arc de Triomphe, in Paris. But what it lacks in space, it more than makes up for in sheer wow factor, inducing nothing short of a paroxysm of awe (or, perhaps, vertigo) the moment you step through its doors.

'What the client didn't want was a conventionally chic, French apartment,' Hubert explains of the interiors, in which rococo shapes meet contemporary finishes, completed with lashings of Oriental prints, taxidermy and a profusion of flowers for good measure. Eschewing a French sensibility that, as Hubert calls it, can at times be 'safe, a bit too tastefully restrained', he opted to go all-out Hollywood. 'It is, more accurately, a Francophile take on Hollywood,' he laughs. 'It really speaks to that Gallic ability to embrace madness in design – there's just this willingness to accept severe juxtaposition. So, if something is to be exciting it must break into the avant-garde.'



**'It is in this bijoux moment that you can live your life as if on the stage'** *Hubert Zandberg*

**ABOVE FROM TOP** Most of the objects d'art that adorn the sitting room are flea-market finds; the entrance hall doubles as the kitchen and is fitted with a minibar. The 'Happy Happy Bow' sculpture is by Stephen Johnson **OPPOSITE PAGE** Bright velvet curtains screen the sitting room from the bedroom

This apartment is another collaboration between Hubert and the homeowner, having worked together on a small pied-à-terre in the Le Marais district ('Small Wonder', *H&G* June 2015), and once again the project is 'a complete reconfiguration in terms of the layout', says Hubert, explaining that the purpose of the flat had to be entirely transformed. 'This was about making a space that was practical for guests who would be staying for the weekend.'

The space was directly influenced by its close proximity to the Champs-Élysées, with its heaving mass of restaurants and clubs. 'We wanted the sitting area to become the focal point, where you could have a meeting or receive friends.' ►







The kitchen and entrance were thus combined as the space became less important, although it's still fully functional. The area between the reception room and bedroom was also opened, introducing softness and theatricality, but, like the kitchen, it can be easily hidden with a draw of the velvet curtains.

'There is a beautiful word in French: *enssembler*,' says Hubert. 'It refers to a person who can not only put objects together, but, through their arrangement, these objects become more than the sum of their parts. That was what this little apartment was all about.'

A habitué of Paris' markets, Hubert's hunter-gatherer approach saw decorating take on something of a reversed logic, where the pieces he collected informed the decor style. 'It's like someone giving you all the ingredients and you need to make a dish from them,' he says. 'We needed to find interesting ways of using our ingredients, ways in which they wouldn't normally be used.' In so doing, Hubert succeeded in rewriting the context of these objects, divorcing them from their historical associations and recasting them in the roles they would play in the setting.

Inspired by his client's American wife, Hubert drew on the kaleidoscopic

## 'After all, if you can't do a folly in Paris, then where can you do it?'

influence of film and stage artist Tony Duquette – 'this apartment is basically our homage to him' – whose aesthetic informed Hubert's stylistic choices. 'We're giving centre stage to flamboyance, and if you're flamboyant enough eventually people believe it. If you do it without bravery, people will question it but, like the best entertainers, this apartment had to do it with complete conviction. "It's never done till it's overdone" has never been truer,' he says.

It's in this extravagant folly ('after all, if you can't do a folly in Paris, then where can you do it?') that life and theatre collide in spectacular fashion. 'It is in this bijoux moment, created with a sense of escapism and just a little madness, that you can live your life as if on a stage.' ■



FROM TOP  
Oriental and botanical elements decorate the bathroom. The Cloisonné and glazed ceramic pots are by HZI; the space is separated from the bedroom by a small storage unit OPPOSITE PAGE A gold sunburst mirror presides over the bedroom. Hubert designed both the bed and mirror. The mohair rug is by Coral Stephens

