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A man with short grey hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and dark trousers, sits on a modern chair. He is in a room filled with various objects. Behind him is a large framed poster with the text 'I want ornaments on everything'. To his left is a shelf with a Buddha statue and other small items. To his right is a large bronze bust of a man's head. In front of him is a glass table with several yellow glass spheres and a book. The room has a white wall and a dark floor.

I want ornaments
on everything

HUNTER GATHERER

HUBERT ZANDBERG'S APARTMENT IS A MELTING-POT, RICH IN THE PARAPHERNALIA OF HIS OBSESSIVE COLLECTING

TEXT DOMINIC BRADBURY PHOTOGRAPHER MARK LUSCOMBE WHYTE, WARREN HEATH

A vertical view of a hallway or room. On the left is a dark wooden door. On the right, a tall, thin, dark metal stand holds a large, ornate, dark brown ceramic vase with a plant. Above the vase are two circular, reddish-brown decorative objects. To the right of the stand is a small, thin metal table with a stack of books on it. The floor is covered with a light-colored, textured rug.

Above left: Hubert Zandberg
The hall: an anatomical model shares space with a large red hat from Cameroon and decorative totem poles made by Zandberg.





EVEN AS A PRECOCIOUS SEVEN-YEAR-OLD GROWING UP IN Colesberg, Hubert Zandberg's passions attracted attention. There was a postcard collection, antique bottles and schoolboy erasers, all in the hundreds, that solicited radio and newspaper interviews documenting his obsessive tendencies.

Now, almost 25 years on, the setting is Notting Hill in west London and a one-bedroom flat above a furniture shop just around the corner from Portobello Road, amid a mixture of Moroccan cafes and increasingly sophisticated interiors shops. And Zandberg is still collecting, his apartment transformed into a unique destination for ranks of tortoise shells, toy cars, photographs, caravan touring pennants, African headdresses and so much more.

'I live for the markets,' says Zandberg. 'I go to the Paris Fleamarkets, to New York and Africa as well. And I'm always the first down at the Portobello Road market. I see so many exquisite objects and the flat has really evolved as the collections have evolved. But the pleasure for me now is less the obsession to have all these things than bringing them into use, because as an interior designer they become your tools, your point, and there's a thrill in seeing how they go with other things.'

Some collections Zandberg takes seriously, such as his miniature Dogon ladders from Mali, used in burial rights. Or the framed set of African gold weights that hangs above his bed. But others – from Victorian false eyeballs to a fine set of American 50s glamour pictures – are chosen with a spirit of playfulness, with Zandberg enjoying the



sense of fun that comes, for instance, from putting a stuffed parrot and a set of toy cars alongside a 20th-century design classic such as the Jean Prouvé yellow-topped table in the kitchen.

'I suppose I still haven't grown up, so there are toys everywhere,' Zandberg says. 'Maybe one day I'll give them to my nephew when he can really appreciate them. But you do become more discerning and selective as time goes on and, as a collector, you also have to be able to let go, exchange things and buy others. And really this flat is an exercise in blending all these things together. It's all in the mix, and the French, especially, understand this very well and have a respect for the ensemblier. That's very much what I see myself as – a mixer of objects, the creator of vignettes and moods.'

Opposite: In the living-room, Hubert has combined butterfly collections with old tin buckets and a mix of art and classical furniture. It's a look he pulls off with confidence.

Above: The view from Hubert's bedroom takes in a stack of garden boxes which come from a flea market in Paris.



Zandberg's mother is a keen amateur designer, always rearranging and repainting their home in Colesberg in the Great Karoo. His father is another collector, as well as a gardener, who worked as an agricultural adviser. The young Hubert would accompany his dad on trips around the farms, drinking in the farmhouses and the homesteads, their Englishness seeming quite surreal against the African backdrop.

As well as collecting, Zandberg became increasingly aware of design and as a teenager, lapped up copies of decor magazines whenever he could get hold of them. He dipped his toe into convention when he went off to university at Stellenbosch to study law like so many of his contemporaries. But soon after graduating he was tempted into retail design and merchandising, and having put together a

small portfolio, he stepped on a plane to London. "I got off the plane, dumped my backpack, and rushed off to the Conran Shop because Terence Conran was like a god to us in South Africa at the time. And that day I landed a job at the flower van near the Conran Shop on Fulham Road, which is where it all started. I didn't have any money when I arrived, nothing. I thought I was going to be scrubbing toilets when I got here. But I was lucky and moved to a job at Heal's, and then I met David Champion."

Champion, also a South African, is a generation older than Zandberg, but with a common outlook and a similar attitude to design. Zandberg started working at the David Champion shop in Westbourne Grove, but soon graduated to working alongside



Champion as an interior designer, becoming an equal partner a couple of years ago.

David and I think aesthetically in very similar ways, even though we bring different things to the partnership and have a different approach to the way we work day to day. But I'm sure if you grow up in the same light, with the same colours surrounding you, it does have an impact. Africa really is a different culture and South Africa is such a weird, individual place. You can't get away from that."

Opposite: The bed is by Champion-Zandberg, and the tulip chair by Eero Saarinen. The bulldog's head (opposite, above the bed) and the flamingo on the console came from a London taxidermy specialist.

HUBERT ZANDBERG'S TIPS FOR COLLECTORS

- Great collections should have merit in themselves and a point of view
- The collector who buys only what he can afford is no collector at all. The serious collector overdoes it and often overbids at auctions
- Money is not the object – some powerful collections cost next to nothing. Try "shopping" in the veld or on the beach
- Anything can become a collection, themes can include texture and form
- Use collections as a decorative effect by placing them in unusual locations
- Be discerning when buying pieces – ask "Is this something I'm going to want in five years' time?"
- Isolate an object from its environment – a good object stands out anywhere
- Less can be more – collections can often be improved by reducing their size, replacing less important pieces with more important ones



Zandberg's apartment, which he moved into three-and-a-half years ago, is just a short walk away from their offices. There are many African associations; the sitting-room walls are painted a sandy shade that reminds Zandberg of the Great Karoo; raffia mats from Swaziland cover the floor; hats from Cameroon and west Africa hang on the walls in the hall; and a 'compulsory' zebra-skin rug inhabits the bedroom.

Yet this is a real melting-pot, rich with invention. Zandberg says he is often accused of being contrived, but at the same time he is not overly precious and can be surprisingly down-to-earth. Paint colours are Dulux, nothing too fancy. The kitchen was given a quick makeover with silver Hammerite paint for the walls and black for the old pine units. The curtains in the sitting-room were made from army blankets with a loose lining of presentation felt, while the leather blinds in the bedroom are actually a set of old horse straps.

'I look at this flat and sometimes ask, "what were you thinking of?" says Zandberg. 'But what's the point in denying your obsessions?' Why not enjoy showing them off and taking it all with a pinch of salt? It becomes fun to expose yourself through your environment; it really should be an extension of your personality. As designers, what we're always striving towards is creating a space for people to lose themselves in, to take them into a different world, and in that sense it's theatre. And this apartment is theatre.'



Right: False Victorian eyeballs and American pool balls

Opposite: Caravan touring pennants hang on one wall of the kitchen, while on the other are toy cars and large shop letters from the Paris Fleamarkets. The table is by Jean Prouvé

DAVID CHAMPION AND HUBERT ZANDBERG WILL BE OPENING ROOMS ON VIEW 2002, WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE FROM 23 TO 26 MAY AT THE SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE.

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