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# House & Garden

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THE

# EXHIBITIONIST

A LOVE OF ART WAS HUBERT ZANDBERG'S STARTING POINT FOR THE GRAPHIC GLAMOUR IN THIS LONDON TOWN HOUSE

TEXT MALAIKA BYNG  
PHOTOGRAPHS MARK LUSCOMBE-WHYTE



In the study three photographs from the series *Asylum* by Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin hang above the fireplace. The retro-Italian chandelier is from an antique shop in Brussels OPPOSITE PAGE The stripes of the Kasthall carpet make a bold impression in the reception room but it's the Barry Reigate painting that takes centre stage





## Designer Savvy

### HUBERT ZANDBERG ON WHAT DEFINES HIS DECOR STYLE

- Q What's the cornerstone of your decor style?
- A Obsessive compulsive disorder.
- Q Who sculpted your decor tastes?
- A I'm increasingly aware of how early in one's life our tastes are formed. The relentlessly defined and ordered Karoo landscape and my mother, Bets Zandberg, who changed our family home around almost seasonally were definitely influential. However, one's aesthetic is invariably constantly shifting and demands perpetual re-evaluation. Paul Smith insists 'you can find inspiration in everything' - and if you can't, look again!
- Q How do you imbue interiors with a sense of South Africa?
- A Africa's forms and patterns, as well as the intense texture and immediacy of nature inevitably resurface in my work - almost to a point where one has to consciously downplay it in different cultural environments. Africa made me aware of the importance of allowing the immediate surroundings to inform interior spaces, whether it presents one foremost with nature or indeed, culture.
- Q What's your formula for using colour and pattern?
- A We aim to be non formulaic, every interior demands a unique approach in finding the balance that makes the space work aesthetically and practically. Whether used subtly or boldly, colour and pattern need a confident approach to really make an impact.
- Q What shop could you not survive without?
- A The Michael Stevenson gallery in Cape Town. I recently suggested that an exhibition of David Goldblatt's work should be compulsory national therapy for all South Africans of my generation or older. But this is probably true for a lot of good art.

‘ IN SOUTH AFRICA, YOU HAVE A LOT OF VISUAL STIMULATION FROM AN EARLY AGE, BE IT THE DRAMATIC LANDSCAPE OR GEOMETRIC PATTERNS OF CLOTHING. IT HAS BRED A CONFIDENCE OF STROKE IN ME ’ HUBERT ZANDBERG



**ABOVE** Zandberg kept the kitchen and dining room open plan but hung curtains that can be drawn for privacy when formally entertaining. The fabric has a glamorous sheen and is from Zimmer + Rohde **RIGHT** Looking from the reception room into the entrance hall, a coyote-skin throw has been placed on the sofa along with a Paul Smith cushion



fireplaces were thus swiftly replaced with contemporary stone ones. He also lacquered the cupboards and gave the walls and shelves of the owner's study a warm textured finish. Interior doors were swapped with curtains to soften the aesthetic further, maximising the sense of space.

The look also needed an injection of energy. Thankfully, the artwork gave Zandberg his cue to be bold, something for which he rarely needs much encouragement. Barry Reigate's riotous canvas in the sitting room – with his characteristic jumble of warped cartoon imagery – was the starting point for a graphic theme. Thick stripes line the floor of the living room, echoed in cushions covered in Paul Smith fabric. And in the attic master bedroom, a striking branch-effect black-and-white headboard, which looks almost hand painted, ▶

**ABOVE** Behind the curvaceous form of the Pucci 'Swivel Chair' an L-shaped sofa – by Hubert Zandberg Interiors – occupies one part of the reception room **OPPOSITE PAGE** Glass electrical insulators from power stations make quirky centrepieces on the dining table

**W**ith huge picture windows illuminating fresh clean spaces, this North London home provides the perfect backdrop for the owner's burgeoning art collection. Home to an array of exciting works by emerging British names, who better to decorate it than interior designer and art fanatic Hubert Zandberg?

Introduced to the homeowner by an art consultant who knew they'd be on the same wavelength, South African-born Zandberg possesses an eye for the unusual and has an inherent understanding of how to make a work of art sing. Even the property's long formal garden functions like a gallery. Here, a sculpture of a palm tree made from old lorry tyres by Douglas White makes a striking statement.

But the prospect of living in a pristine exhibition space is not a comfortable one, particularly for someone who lives alone. 'The art had to take centre stage but it couldn't be at the expense of the home's cosiness and its sense of luxury,' Zandberg explains. Exacerbating the challenge was the fact that the two-bedroom Georgian town house had recently been reworked by a developer with a penchant for MDF. 'The building had good bones but I needed to soften the white-box look and raise the level of the finishes,' he says. The MDF





**ABOVE** Topiary balls line the steps leading up to the garden where the Douglas White sculpture has been installed **LEFT** Looking at the back of the house, the large windows of the reception room and dining room can be seen **RIGHT** An African stool in the master bathroom contrasts with the contemporary finishes elsewhere



**RIGHT** The graphic headboard installation is by Hubert Zandberg Interiors and runs the width of the room **OPPOSITE PAGE** In the guest bedroom a four-poster bed is dressed in Zandberg's chocolate-and-white 'Barcelona' fabric. The decorative star is a flea-market find



is brought home by patterned cushions and black slatted blinds.

But it's in the guest bedroom that he's really gone all out. From the windows to the four-poster bed, the room is swathed in a striking hexagonal Hubert Zandberg print. 'I like to view guest bedrooms as separate entities because they're only used as night-time spaces. They're a platform to play,' he says with a grin.

Zandberg puts his propensity for being bold down to his roots, despite adopting London as his home 15 years ago. 'In South Africa, you have a lot of visual stimulation from an early age, be it the dramatic landscape or geometric patterns of clothing. It has bred a confidence of stroke in me,' he says.

While there's little that's African about the design language of this house, it certainly packs a graphic punch. Rooms are also filled with a mix of retro references. The swivel armchairs and coffee table in the sitting room speak of 1960s Hollywood, while the sculptural carved-wood chairs in the basement dining room are retro Italian.

Then there's the contemporary take on a modernist Brazilian bench, which sits beneath the Reigate painting. 'There was already a holiday feel to the house because of its leafy Hampstead setting, so I wanted to try and transport the owner a little bit and play on his aspirations. He works long hours in finance, so needs a feeling of escapism when he comes home. Even the use of fabric in the guest bedroom has something a bit Hamptons about it,' Zandberg explains. 'But by loosely mixing things up, the references don't feel too obvious or clichéd.'

The designer willingly admits he is a little compulsive when it comes to collecting unusual pieces of furniture and regularly

trawls Parisian flea markets for rare finds. The star on the wall of the guest bedroom hails from a French cinema and the curvaceous glass vessels on the dining table were once part of electrical power stations. 'I often buy things long before they have a home,' he confesses.

But despite the eclectic mix of furniture, the look is aptly crisp and smart for a man living on his own. 'I didn't want to suffocate him with too much decoration,' Zandberg says. Everything is carefully balanced, from the juxtaposition of pattern with strong architectural lines to the sense of glamour mixed with a certain dryness. Zandberg likens the aesthetic to a well-tailored suit: 'It is comfortable and references the past but its cut is sharp and up-to-date.'

■ Hubert Zandberg Interiors ☎ 0044 (0)20 8962 2776