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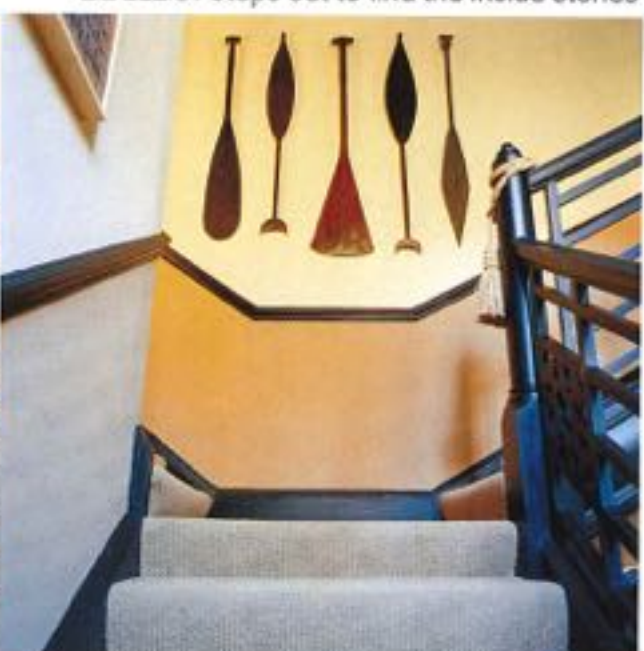
NINA CAMPBELL AND
GEORGINA VON ETZDORF
IN THEIR STUDIOS



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LIZ ELLIOT steps out to find the inside stories



DECORATOR PROFILE

Hubert Zandberg

Hubert Zandberg is not a decorator for the faint-hearted. At the Notting Hill studio he shares with business partner David Champion, he declares he's no soft-soaper, and that clients always see the 'real me'. Hubert also admits he's opinionated. 'The designer-client relationship is a partnership,' he says. 'I have the right to push for my ideas, too.' He describes decorating as 'going on a journey', and insists that clients embark boots and all. 'Sometimes we reach rock bottom,' he says, 'but there's euphoria, too.'

Hubert's decorative style resists pigeonholing, and he asserts that Champion Zandberg can turn out Scottish traditional, opulent glamour or high-gloss modern with equal verve. Most important, he believes, is his eye for startling objects. An inveterate collector himself – 'though it's distinctly untrendy for a thirty-one year old' – he sees shopping with clients as a crucial part of the design process. Portobello is a regular hunting ground, and the fruits of one recent foray – a mattress's coiled innards – now hang, modern art style, on his studio walls. This is typical of his willingness to take risks. 'I never design indifferent rooms – people either love or hate them.'

Rule-breaker he may be, but Hubert is also a perfectionist. He insists on accurate floor plans until the bones of a room are correct, and demands immaculate workmanship – he will, for example, hang the curtains himself to guarantee the right effect. Although Hubert studied law, not interiors, in his native Cape Town, designing is clearly in his blood. In 1995, during a visit to London, he enjoyed a stint at Heaf's, where he learnt the valuable skill of creating displays 'with minimal time and resources'. Soon afterwards, he migrated to David Champion's shop, and two years ago their design partnership, Champion Zandberg, was launched.

Hubert is at pains to point out that, despite a clutch of glamorous clients, his main priority is to create comfortable, soulful interiors that please both him and his client. Currently, he's getting his teeth into a new-build house in Toronto, as well as working on ongoing projects in France and the UK. How does he gauge a client's design wishes? 'From their own personal style, from their jewellery, from talking to them,' he says, thoughtfully. The office mantra, he reveals, is: 'we'll make it work!' For all his forceful opinions, it's clear that Hubert wants his clients to be happy. **JUDITH WILSON**
Champion Zandberg, 324 Portobello Road, W10 (tel: 020-8968 4042). Hubert Zandberg (tel: 07956-629328) >