



Collector Lorenz Bäumer and gallerist Marie-Bérangère Gosserez at his Paris apartment with charred-oak and coppered-steel Spring/Summer bench by Valentin Loellmann and (far right) titanium, tissue-paper and acrylic Oblique Cassée light sculpture by Valérie Jolly

## FINDERS KEEPERS

# contemporary design

Enthusiasm for opulence and the quirky unites a Paris jeweller and gallerist, says Kasia Maciejowska. **Portrait by Léa Crespi**

**S**itting on a red velvet sofa in his 9th arrondissement Parisian apartment, wearing a jacket of the same fabric in deep aubergine and flanked by outré art, *objets* and trinkets, jewellery house founder Lorenz Bäumer quips, "I confess there are a great many things I like to bring home." He gestures to the brimming shelves behind him. "Unfortunately!"

His boutique, meanwhile, is on Place Vendôme, though he claims to feel blasé about the exceptional address. Bäumer's first-floor design office – an intimate vestibule containing a contemporary leather desk and his children's drawings of his jewellery – looks out towards Napoleon atop the Vendôme column.

The shop below unfolds like a jewellery box, with chambers tucked into corners and secreted down carpeted corridors. Atop the spiral stairwell that links the two spaces, a delicate mobile of hand-blown glass droplets suspended on silk threads (pictured overleaf), created by Maastricht-based contemporary designer Anne Büscher, throws light around the walls. "It's an exceptionally subtle piece," he enthuses. Bäumer commissioned it from gallerist Marie-Bérangère Gosserez, having eyed up a similar one in the window of her space near the Picasso Museum. There, Gosserez's selection of contemporary creations – each with an interesting design twist – can be seen in all their idiosyncratic glory. Gosserez's feel for opulence is balanced by her

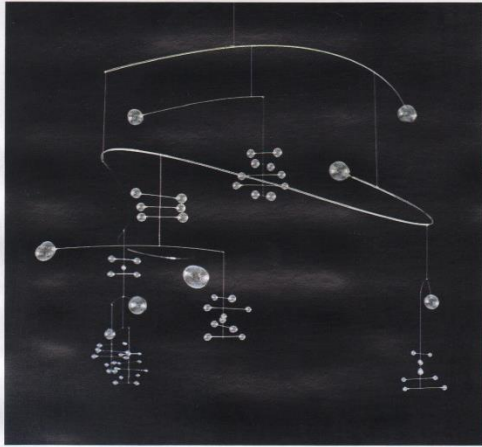
eye for the quirky, so there's always something unusual.

That Galerie Gosserez window is a favourite pit stop of Bäumer's while riding through Paris at night on his bike. It's a habit with somewhat costly results, he admits. He now owns eight pieces (and counting) from Gosserez, the majority of which live with him in the apartment he shares with his wife Géraldine de Fouquières and their three children. Two chairs (example pictured overleaf) by Valentin Loellmann (the German designer, now based in Maastricht, who won the PAD London prize for Best Contemporary Design in 2013 and 2017) have escaped to country life northeast of Paris in Saint-Nicolas-

d'Acy, where Bäumer and his wife have a second home.

High up in his Paris home, sitting beside Gosserez and plying us both with his favourite Alain Ducasse chocolate, Bäumer gestures towards the round Black Sea coffee table (acquired for €14,000, pictured overleaf) at our knees, by Belgian designer Damien Gernay. "It was my earliest Gosserez purchase, made when we first met at PAD Paris a few years ago – although I didn't buy on first look because I always take time to go for a second drive-by." That year he was on the judging jury for the fair's awards. "Not the year that I won!" Gosserez ribs him. "You definitely only won because I wasn't on the panel," he jokes. Recalling his first visit to her stand, he describes





**“Marie had something different – these unique pieces that just spoke to me”**



the gallerist's curation as revealing “a certain something different”, which meant “she had these unique pieces that just spoke to me”.

The Gernay piece is the kids' favourite as well as his own, not only for its sturdiness when barged into by small limbs, but also for how the waves are of indistinct scale. “I'm a surfer,” he says by way of explanation, “and when you're surfing it's all about the scale of the waves. What's so interesting about this is you don't know the scale; you could be looking down from a plane or you could be up close.” He also enjoys the way the tabletop appears alive and shifts between black and white, depending on the light from different angles, and (especially) the innovative production methods the designer used. “In my own work I'm always playing

with technology, so I appreciate a similar tendency in furniture”.

Gosserez shares her friend's excitement and continues in an animated tone about treating a natural material like leather in an unfamiliar way. You can see precisely why she and Bäumer connect; they're compatible on the passion scale. They also once collaborated with roles reversed, when Galerie Gosserez commissioned an art piece from Bäumer. A sculptural pendant, set against three layers of mirror to give a kinetic effect, it is called *Two Million Carats*. Gosserez appreciates the distinct experience of working with a collector like Bäumer who's familiar with design production. “He has a sophisticated knowledge of how things are made,” she says, “and a developed



Clockwise from top left: hand-blown glass and silk mobile by Anne Büscher. Steel and leather Black Sea table by Damien Gernay. Charred-hazel and oak Fall/Winter chair by Valentin Loellmann

knowledge of the decorative-arts world.”

It must be a treat for designers to be commissioned by these two: “I know the best designs come about when you give someone creative freedom,” Bäumer says. On

the odd occasion that he steps in, however, he expresses the kind of well-considered conviction that must be tough to refuse. He gives an example: “There's a lamp [Drift, €9,500, by Loellmann] like an upturned boat at Marie's gallery that I like, but I want it to be gilded inside so it casts a more flattering light.” It's left to Gosserez to debate the merits of gold versus white light with the designer. “I don't take no for an answer,” he jokes, but no doubt telling the truth. Gosserez accepts her mission with an experienced laugh.

At first glance the pieces in the collection vary wildly, echoing Bäumer's eclectic taste. Yet a common thread can be found in their experimental design processes, which result in unusually captivating works that are playful and charming but with a polished finish. Besides the two chairs by Loellmann,

other Gosserez-sourced treasures by the designer include a bench (€7,800, pictured on previous page) in charred oak on a coppered steel frame and a lounge (€24,000) in walnut and brass; all feature non-uniform naturalistic legs that bear witness to the handmaking process, a style characteristic that Bäumer particularly adores. Gosserez has also found him a tissue paper and titanium light sculpture (€3,400, pictured on previous page) by Brussels-based artist Valérie Jolly and a decorative table piece (€3,000) in porcelain and linen by French artist/designer Bénédicte Vallet.

Uninhibited confidence defines Bäumer's collecting personality. This is evidenced by the diverse collection of items surrounding him – shepherds' staves and Indonesian metalwork via pop art and light sculptures. “I never buy for a specific location or in the spirit of decorating. I just buy objects because I think they are inherently amazing,” he says. ♦ Galerie Gosserez, 3 Rue Debelleye, Paris 75003 (+339-5330 1078; [galeriegosserez.com](http://galeriegosserez.com)). PAD London, Berkeley Square, London W1 ([pad-fairs.com](http://pad-fairs.com)); 1-7 October 2018.

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