

LUXURY



## Bounty Hunters

COLLECTABLES

As PAD, the Pavilion for Art and Design, rolls into London's Berkeley Square for its ninth year, we meet three ardent collectors who have built loyal relationships with the fair's regular exhibitors

Interviews Bethan Ryder  
Photographs Philip Sinden

### PIERRE LE-TAN

*The Paris-based illustrator's apartment is a treasure trove of Islamic and Oriental art and antiques, with many pieces sourced from Alexis Renard*

I've been collecting since I was seven. It started with Oriental art, probably because of my origins. My father [artist Lê Phô] was Vietnamese and he was a collector. He wasn't as compulsive as I am, but he gave me the taste for it. He liked all sorts of things - Chinese porcelain, medieval and European sculpture. We would go looking together. I didn't buy very expensive things, but I was quite selective.

The most interesting part about collecting is finding things, and then acquiring them is very important, for some stupid reason. It's like the gambler, throwing the dice. It's a full-time pastime for me, I've bought so many things in my life - thousands and thousands - and sold a lot too, in order to buy other things, or pay taxes.

I go to shops and galleries in Paris, London, wherever I travel. The auction room is quite important too, the bidding process is very exciting. It's like going to a casino. If I hadn't done this, I probably would have been a gambler and I probably would have lost everything. Sometimes I've bid a lot of money without a penny in the bank. Suddenly when the hammer falls you think, 'Oh, gosh, what have I done?', but somehow I managed. It was a nightmare with my first wife, everything I bought she said: 'you can't afford this, why did you buy it?' I would never tell her the real price, I always lied. She became much more interested in my collections when we divorced...

I'm not that interested in extremely expensive things. I've never bought for speculation either, which a lot of people collecting contemporary art do. I always buy unfashionable things and sometimes they

become fashionable and then actually, they don't interest me anymore.

I began visiting Alexis Renard when he first started, about 16 years ago. He had much less important things then, but now he is probably the best Islamic art dealer in Paris. He's done extremely well. I've never sold him anything... yet. I probably will at some point.

Just one 17th-century Islamic tile is not terribly interesting on its own; it can be very beautiful, but I like them when they're mixed together. I have lots of Islamic textiles, rugs and tiles. The most beautiful thing of course is when

you see them in a magnificent mosque or harem, in Turkey for instance. There are some mosques where they've mixed together very different tiles, like a wonderful patchwork. I love the richness of it and that's what I try to recreate at home.

I'm not interested in collecting in terms of a set of something - like stamp collecting, that's dull. No, a collection should reflect one person's taste. It may consist of many different things, but the thing which makes it a collection is the eye. The older I get though, the more I think I could get rid of everything.



Illustrator Pierre Le-Tan at home, holding a 17th-century Iranian Safavid tile

Below: Rebecca Körner in her garden with Bruno Romeda's *Bronze Circle*, 2012. Right: Fleur de Galard with her Ado Chale polygonal table in bronze with red agates inlaid in black resin, c 1970



#### REBECCA KORNER

*Turning her passion for collecting into a career, the interior designer's west London villa is filled with pieces from PAD, with Galerie Dutko being one of her favourite sources*

I think the urge to collect is something you always have. I see my children constantly picking things up – a piece of orange sea glass discovered on a beach in Greece can seem like the biggest find of all time. Maybe it's just the earth sign that we share, but I think this magpie effect starts young. I grew up in Sydney, and my mother was very creative – she's had a massive influence on me. She renovated our very old house and opened it all up. It was like a gallery, with white walls and lots of glass – really modern. Houses like that are de rigueur now, but at the time it was quite forward-thinking.

I really started to train my eye when I moved to Paris to study. I always furnished my flats myself and I moved a lot – to almost every arrondissement. So I'd pick up pieces at the flea markets. Today I still have a beautiful mid-century modern rosewood console that I found at Les Puces. Now I've turned my passion for collecting into a career. I've been creating interiors for people since just before the twins were born – they're six now. Whether it's a commercial or a residential project, it's about finding things that are unique – people increasingly want things that are different.

I discovered PAD in London years ago. It was actually our wedding anniversary. We went in

one weekend and I saw a painting by Agostino Bonalumi and I just had to have it. There are so many things in my home that I found at PAD. I try to go on the first day, before things sell out.

My husband and I discovered the Bruno Romeda sculpture at Galerie Dutko at PAD a few years ago and thought it would look great in the garden. The joy of collecting is also tied to learning about a piece or an artist. Romeda is a contemporary artist who works a lot with geometric shapes. I've always been a fan of his work, it has this motion and continuity to it that is unlike the work of any other artist, and an incredible simplicity that is the hardest thing to achieve.

I love his pieces for outside, but his furniture is also exquisite. It's the raw materials. He uses a lot of bronze, which gathers a patina. Our piece is covered in garden gunk but it still looks fantastic, you don't want to take that off. It now has lilac coming up through it and a little bit of sweet pea in the background. We've got hydrangeas poking through it, too.

PAD is so useful. I don't have to travel; the dealers come from all over the world; and you get the sense that it's curated and that all the dealers are working together in harmony. [dutko.com](http://dutko.com)



#### FLEUR DE GALARD

*The furniture designer divides her time between London and a 19th-century Paris apartment. She mixes antiques with contemporary collectables, many from Galerie Yves Gastou*

I discovered my passion for collecting furniture, art and antiques together with my husband. We met when we were very young and started out by buying small pieces at the Clignancourt flea markets. Then we met Yves Gastou, through a friend about 15 years ago. He came to dinner at our Paris apartment and said, 'Oh, it's very 18th-century', but you know, I come from that kind of background. He said, 'on va réveiller tout ça, or as you would say in English, "let's inject some life into it"'. He sent me a book and said, you like neo-classical design like me, but you need to combine it with other things. Yves really taught me how to mix things up, juxtaposing an 18th-century commode with modern art, for example.

When we first visited his gallery it took a while for my eye to adjust, but then you start buying this piece and that piece and then you buy a lot. I've really been guided by Yves, he's advised me, and most pieces have increased in value. We bought the Ado Chale table before he became a big design name. It's one of his earliest pieces and is very rare because he doesn't usually surround his tables in bronze. I like the fact that it's hexagonal and I love the contrast between the bronze and the mosaic stone top. It's usually covered with books, my handbag, everything... I like furniture that you use, not just pieces that sit like sculptures.

My husband is always finding new pieces, he emails me things all the time. I often have to say 'No, find a place for it first'. I've never sold a piece – if we want a change we just put things in storage. I think we approach collecting differently; for my husband it's more about ownership and possession, for me it's the emotional connection. The piece needs to speak to me. You can't buy everything. I bought a lot of pieces from Yves before they became very expensive – I probably couldn't afford them now. Yves still introduces me to new designers today, that's what's so good about him. He's always got one foot in the future. [galerieyvesgastou.com](http://galerieyvesgastou.com)  
PAD is in Berkeley Square, London W1, from October 14-18; [pad-fairs.com](http://pad-fairs.com)

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