



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

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*

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.

