





# EYE FOR ART

Need help filling your home with pieces that complement its décor? **Andrea Watson** meets the experts who will do just that

Photography by Ben Quinton

**T**he world of interiors has been through a lot of looks since the Noughties; think post industrial, New York loft style, country shabby, country chic, retro, Scandi minimalism, Asian fusion. Now it's all about art collecting. Some homes approach museum standards in the care with which pieces are hung or displayed in glass cases, on plinths, in alcoves, with dramatic lighting to enhance the effect. Interior design, often a mere backdrop, has gone all neutral as a result.

In the 2018 documentary, *The Price of Everything*, director Nathaniel Kahn takes a swipe at this current obsession with collecting art and finds that »»



**FAIR TRADE** Above: Nicholas Campbell picked up these two pieces at the PAD art fair; the glazed stoneware vessel, *left*, is by Gareth Mason and was on the stand for the Carpenters Workshop Gallery, while the white sculptures, *above right*, entitled *Cyclades*, are from Pinto Paris

in some New York apartment blocks, the art is not only identical but is displayed in identical places.

This is what's known as 'art fair art'. Typically, it comprises items such as a mirrored sculpture by Anish Kapoor, a leaping hare by Barry Flanagan, prints by Banksy or Warhol, a pumpkin by Kusama and a balloon dog by Jeff Koons.

It's easy to see why some collections end up looking similar. Forming a collection is expensive but above all time consuming. Consider the figures. In the UK alone, there were 40,000 active artists in 2011, now there are 67,000. There are 150 international biennales, 20 of which are important. There's an art fair somewhere in the world every day. Across the world galleries are mushrooming and auction houses are thriving.

The result is a boom in the number of people advising on art for the home. Some act as curators (who mainly select), some as

consultants (who mainly advise) and some as mere middlemen (who should be avoided). There's no formal qualification for this role yet they are responsible for huge budgets – your budget. Here we look at three very different individuals who will hold the hands of those bitten by the collecting bug.

### NICHOLAS CAMPBELL, NARCISSUS ARTS

The unique selling point of Narcissus Arts, founded by Nicholas Campbell in 2010, was originally a focus on contemporary art priced at under £10,000.

Campbell started out as an art gallery intern aged 16 and went on to study history of art at Oxford Brookes before identifying what he believed was a niche in the crowded consultancy market for affordable art. Subsequently he was engaged by a developer to provide "neutral and contemporary" works for a

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mansion in Chester Square and following this he founded Narcissus Interiors, providing advice on art to the interiors world. Recently, he has teamed up with his cousin, Toby Campbell, of the Rafael Valls gallery in St James's, to launch another service, Campbell Art Advisors.

"Narcissus Arts is doing really well and I want to continue to give advice on art under £10,000 but I also want to cater for clients with a bigger budget," he explains. Once again, Campbell also believes there is a niche in the market. "Toby is an Old Masters specialist, an area that is under-valued."

As an example, he says that while you could still acquire a





**FINE ARTS** Above: Tim Corfield among the antiques at Mackinnon Fine Furniture. Corfield Morris also sources sculptures and paintings, below



Turner watercolour for under £100,000, you would struggle to find a decent contemporary work for that price. “You would pay that for a third rate work by a second rate artist,” he says.

“Old Masters are unsexy – but by the laws of nature that will change,” says Campbell.

In common with almost all private art consultants, Campbell has clients who want to start a collection and he will walk them round Frieze and the major galleries and attend auctions with them. But he also recently landed a client with a mansion in Cheshire for which he will be buying the art. Most of this will be contemporary art, but some will be exceptional pieces of design work.

Like everyone it seems, Campbell is noticing the growing market for design. “This year PAD [the preeminent London design fair] was full of people whereas, apart from day one, the aisles at Frieze were ghostly,” he says.

### TIM CORFIELD, CORFIELD MORRIS

Tim Corfield began life helping in his father’s antique shop in Lymington, Hampshire. One day John McCarthy, who had just floated his retirement company, McCarthy & Stone and bought a mansion near Salisbury, walked in. He wanted help to furnish it with the right stuff.

“Luckily, he chose me,” says Corfield. “It took us five years to fill the house with everything down to the salt spoons.” Soon after Corfield met Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel, and was asked to furnish his house in San Francisco. “Basically I turned to curating after that,” he says.

Now based in London, and teamed with Daniel Morris, formerly of auction house Sotheby’s, the firm has just taken on a third member of staff to advise on contemporary art. “It’s so fashionable it is ridiculous to ignore it,” he says.

Corfield Morris offers a complete service, down to installing art – “yesterday Daniel was fitting light bulbs into a chandelier we bought”. The firm is busy buying daily at auctions and fairs with Corfield, given his background, specialising in



**ART SHOW** Above: Charu Gandhi, of Elicyon, at Chiltern Place, Marylebone. Pieces she has sourced for clients include Jeff Koons *Balloon Dogs* from his Celebration collection, below right

Art consultancy, Gandhi says, has evolved as part of the service that her business provides. “Our clients may have an existing art collection or a genre they want to expand, or in some instances they may be starting out. I will accompany them to galleries, fairs and auctions, but I won’t give advice on value. If it is an asset-based decision, I’m not the one to advise.”

Buying art, she says, needs to be a journey. “You can’t rush the process.” With the growing synergy between art and interior design, Gandhi also thinks of art in a far broader sense which definitely encompasses design and craftsmanship.

She works with leading glass makers, ceramicists, cabinet makers and weavers and will travel almost everywhere to source the materials that she wants to use in projects. When we meet she had just returned from Pietrasanta in Italy, home to the world’s finest marble.

“Art has suffered from the ‘anything goes’ attitude of many. Crafts by comparison, are expertly made and have if anything benefitted from lack of patronage. It is an emerging area and there’s a great deal to explore,” she says. “The precision of the craftsmanship lights a creative fire for me.” ■

the antiques side of the business.

While he knows just how much to pay for a Georgian commode, new art is more of a problem. “It’s troubling to buy in the primary market where prices are plucked from the air. With a new artist, there is no guarantee of a secondary art market.”

Consultants such as Corfield are far less likely to suggest that your purchase of a work will be a good investment. The mantra of collect what you like and don’t think about profit is firmly established. The Corfield Morris message is a simple one: “Buy the right thing even if it costs twice as much.” Half good, in the antiques trade anyway, is no good.

### CHARU GANDHI, ELYCYON

The increasing trend for luxury developers and interior designers to become art dealers by default

has also seen the emergence of ‘accidental art consultants’. Charu Gandhi is one of this new breed. Charu’s first exposure to this new culture came while working for Candy & Candy where she was projected into the world of luxury interior design and art. Among the projects she worked on was One Hyde Park, where she was part of a team charged with assembling an art collection that included works by Joan Miró, Antony Gormley, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Damien Hirst and David Hockney.

In 2014 she launched her own design and consultancy business, Elicyon, which she describes as “an atelier where creativity and luxury is at the heart of everything we do.” With a background in architecture – Gandhi studied at the Architectural Association – her aesthetic is strongly influenced by materials, space and light.

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