



INTERIOR DESIGN

A Neutral Canvas For Collectibles

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The vivid strokes of unusual antiques set against a neutral backdrop create a portrait of understated elegance in the Fort Worth apartment of Joseph Minton, ASID. Partner of David Corley in the Minton-Corley design concern, Minton wanted his treetop apartment to be a quiet refuge, a private and comfortable retreat filled with his favorite collectibles.

In previous residences, Minton had placed many of the same bright pieces against colorful settings ranging from slick, bold midnight blue to soft and sunny peach. Drama emanated from the

play of contrasts, colors and treasures.

Equally elegant, this apartment in Fort Worth's Monticello neighborhood downplays drama, highlighting the antiques with subtlety and serenity. Its splash of intensity comes from the pieces themselves, and from the impact of Minton's changing design vision.

"I wanted to play up my colorful accessories and rugs more than the apartment," he says. "Colorful walls, of course, do show these things up very well. This time I just felt like going with the neutral shades."

If the finished apartment is a portrait of his vision and personality, then the

Joseph Minton has arranged his Fort Worth apartment as a backdrop for his interests — most notably, his antique collections.

ABOVE: The apartment's neutral palette, reflected in the beige canvas, slipcovered banquettes, is brightened with colorful antique touches. The living room features a Bessarabian kilim rug, on which rests a hammered-iron Italian coffee table. Various collections, like the woven Indian ikat throw pillows, appear throughout the apartment; the large silver langouste rearing its spiny head on the coffee table is part of Minton's crustacean collection.



The quiet blend of colors and fabrics is the soft canvas for dabs and splashes of collectibles.

blank, primed canvas for the portrait is the natural-toned backdrop he created within the five rooms.

Although the foundation he prepared for the display of his antiques is subtle and subdued, it is far from bland and far from ordinary. Indeed, Minton stripped away the apartment's mundane, mass appeal trappings, replacing them with simple yet uncommon touches.

For example, he paneled the walls of the elongated living/dining room with corrugated cardboard, which he likes for its ribbed texture and earthy color; and he painted the woodwork to match. In the bedroom and dressing room, Minton chose cream cotton as a wall covering, again for its color and texture. Continuing to refurbish the basic shell, he stripped away that ubiquitous symbol of modern apartment life, wall-to-wall shag carpeting, and replaced it with sisal.

"I wanted a natural background for all my antique rugs," says Minton. "And I've found these neutral tones really bring out the bright colors."

As the final touches on the apartment's backdrop, he replaced all the curtains with wooden slat blinds; mirrored the living

room's long wall to reflect light and open up the narrow space; and painted the ceilings a shade he calls greyed sky blue, the color of the sky on somber, overcast days.

After the apartment shell was thoroughly neutral and natural in both tone and texture, Minton began filling it with the antiques he has collected on his travels through the years. The quiet blend of colors and fabrics became the soft canvas for dabs and splashes of collectibles — rugs, bronze and crystal pieces, Oriental porcelain, art and French and English furniture.

"This apartment is a complete mixture of what I like best, antiques displayed on a simple background," he says. "I've been a collector for years, but the things I like most are the more unusual pieces."

Reflecting his taste for the unique, one table in the living room holds his bronze and

ABOVE: The dining area features antique Windsor chairs and a French steel and slate dining table. Minton describes the white, gargoyle table at the edge of the Portuguese needlepoint rug as "funny, English Gothic" in style. RIGHT: An 18th-century tobacco leaf drying basket from North Carolina highlights the living room's mirrored wall. The Italian table beneath it shelters a Chinese pigskin trunk.





Minton's retreat of antiques is something of an international melting pot of influences.

silver crustacean collection. Minton says he came across one of these Japanese creations by chance, and from that point on, he's been hooked on crustaceans. On a recent trip to New York, he picked up several more.

"I love crustacean things," he says. "Some of them are just delightful. I have one that's wonderful — it's a giant shrimp or prawn with legs that move when you pick it up. Really, you pick it up and all the legs start waving."

Crustaceans aside, Minton's other collectibles are delightful on their own merit. He's fascinated with antique rugs, particularly Bessarabian kilim rugs like the one in his living room. "They're more European than Oriental in origin," he says. "My partner found mine in London, but I've gotten so I can spot them. They're tightly woven, and they almost always have a flower motif. Mine features a giant urn with giant flowers."

Another interest is fine porcelain — especially antique blanc-de-chine, monochrome pieces such as the Chinese vases and Foo dogs in his living room. Yet another interest is the art of Cuban painter Julio Larraz.

Minton's quiet retreat of collectibles is, in fact, something of an international melting pot of influences. While many of the smaller

pieces and accessories reflect an Oriental origin, the larger pieces provide a varied itinerary of places and eras; country French and Régence antiques blend with English Windsor, Regency and Gothic furniture in graceful harmony.

But despite layering these bright antique touches on the canvas, Minton says his primary concern was the creation not of a showplace for antiques, but of a comfortable, livable habitat, a background for his life and interests.

"My general philosophy is that each room must actually be and look comfortable," he says. "Each room must be used, and it must suit the person living there."

"This was simply the background I liked for me, for my small apartment retreat." □

LEFT: A stunningly bright North African rug highlights the bedroom. The throw pillows and antique chair upholstery are verdure, or tapestry featuring blues and greens of Régence origin. ABOVE: A sampling of Minton's smaller treasures rests on the bleached oak French table in the bedroom. Clustered here are ivory and carved horn pieces, a bleached turtle shell, a small 17th-century Russian icon, crystal newel ornaments and North African iron figures.