



## Choosing Art for a Bohemian Chic-Style Home

The beauty is that there are no rules

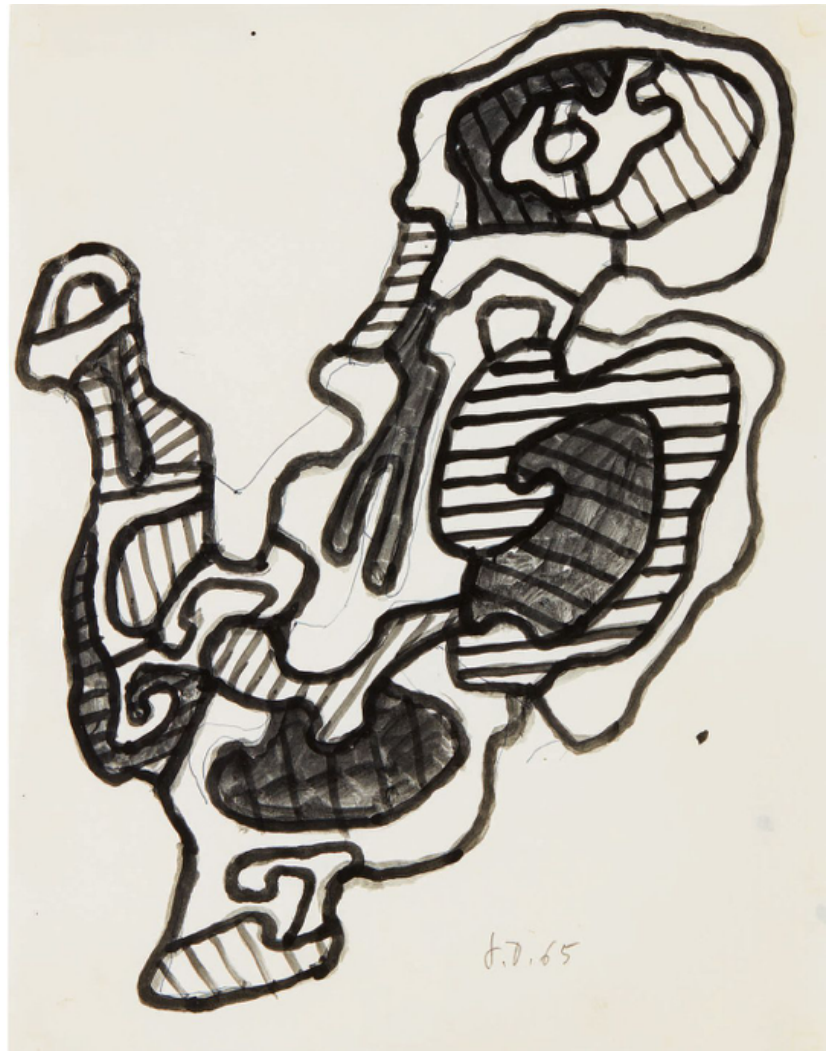
By Jennifer Tzeses

Designed by Sara Simon president of Handsome Salt Interior Design this bohemian-chic home is as much about eclectic decor as it is artwork. Courtesy of dasMOD

Bohemian-style décor has a worldly vibe that's as far away as it is eclectic. There's a free spiritedness that embraces texture, color and pattern in an unrestrained way. And while each accessory and piece of furniture has its specific provenance, when it all comes together, the look has a creative flow that feels effortless.

Selecting artwork for this type of style is about looking beyond one dimension and the walls themselves.

“It’s a house that is filled with found objects and art collected over time and reflective of life’s experiences, especially travel,” said Allison Babcock of Allison Babcock Design in Sag Harbor, New York. “There is usually a story behind the art. It can come in all forms: sculpture, woven items, paintings, photographs, wood carvings, ceramics, architectural objects, tapestries and rugs.”



*Cafetiere by Jean Dubuffet. Courtesy of Sotheby's*

In the late 19th century, when people began to go abroad, they brought back paintings and objects to represent their travels, said Kathy Wong, Bonhams specialist in California and Western Paintings and Sculpture. North African and Middle Eastern silk rugs were popular items to tote home because they were easy to transport.

“People also brought home Orientalist tapestries and paintings depicting Arab culture—travelers at an oasis, street scenes, whirling dervishes—as well as Vienna bronze figures depicting people in various daily pursuits,” Ms. Wong said. “These cultures were considered very exotic at the time.”

Artists around the world took their cues from Bohemianism.



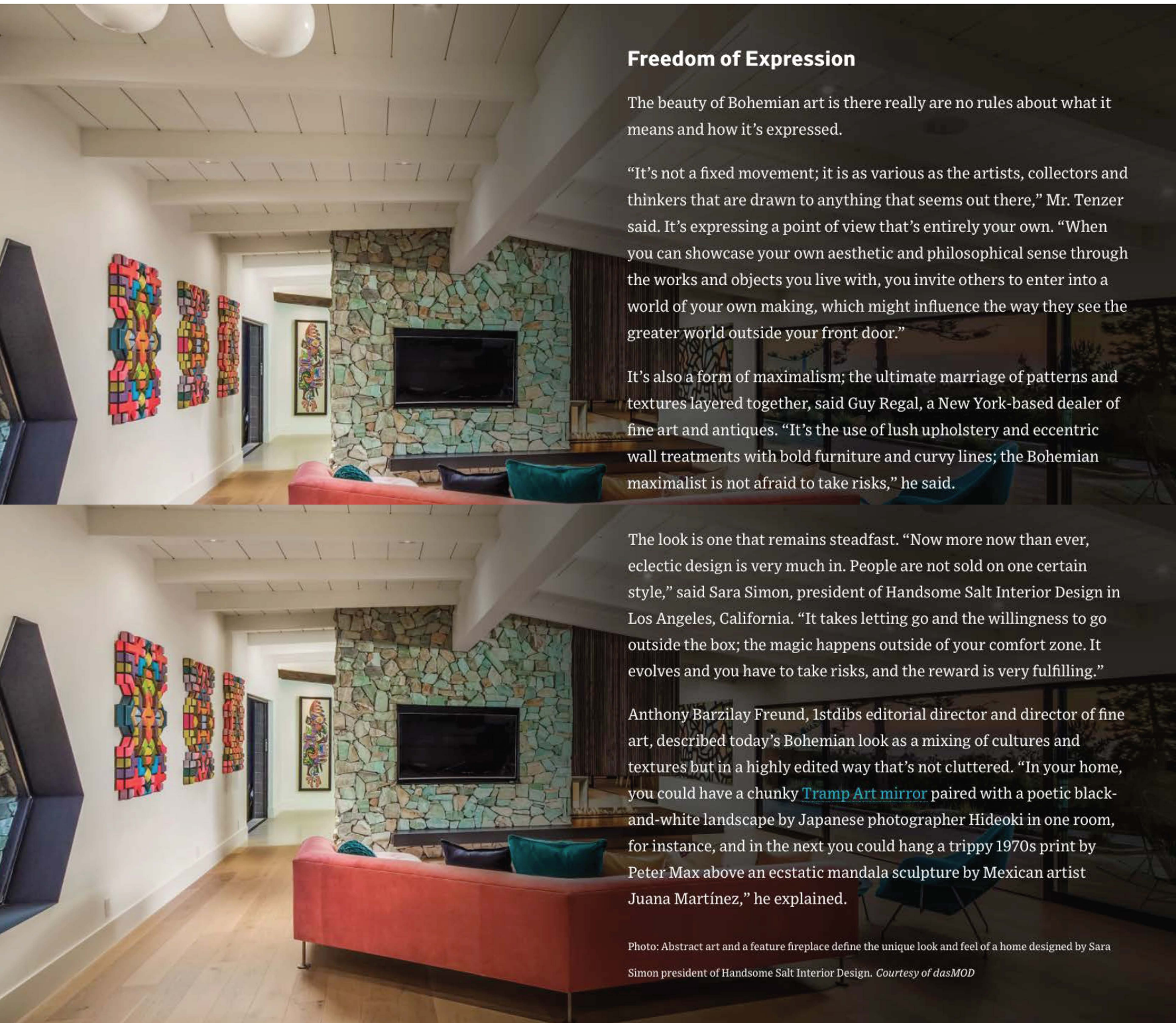


"Pete Doherty Baby Shambles" by Elizabeth Peyton. *Courtesy of Sotheby's*

“All great Modern and Contemporary art began as Bohemian, starting with the Impressionists who rebelled against the strictures of the Academy in favor of a freer form of expression,” said Harrison Tenzer, head of Sotheby’s Contemporary Art Online sales in New York. “Bohemian is the same as punk, radical, avant-garde, cutting-edge, unconventional—generally drawing outside of the lines. True Bohemians are the ones doing the work to question and ultimately change society at large by showing us something we haven’t seen before,” he said.

“While art was seen as existing outside of mass consumer culture to a certain degree, it was Andy Warhol who led the charge in blurring distinctions between high and low culture, ultimately opening the door for artists to explore any subject, material or ideas that had previously existed outside of the realm of traditional fine art,” Mr. Tenzer said.

This type of aesthetic is an amalgamation of life’s many facets, reflected in everything from art and furniture to décor and curio—and how it’s all displayed. The look is an expression of experience and a life well lived.



## Freedom of Expression

The beauty of Bohemian art is there really are no rules about what it means and how it's expressed.

"It's not a fixed movement; it is as various as the artists, collectors and thinkers that are drawn to anything that seems out there," Mr. Tenzer said. It's expressing a point of view that's entirely your own. "When you can showcase your own aesthetic and philosophical sense through the works and objects you live with, you invite others to enter into a world of your own making, which might influence the way they see the greater world outside your front door."

It's also a form of maximalism; the ultimate marriage of patterns and textures layered together, said Guy Regal, a New York-based dealer of fine art and antiques. "It's the use of lush upholstery and eccentric wall treatments with bold furniture and curvy lines; the Bohemian maximalist is not afraid to take risks," he said.

The look is one that remains steadfast. "Now more now than ever, eclectic design is very much in. People are not sold on one certain style," said Sara Simon, president of Handsome Salt Interior Design in Los Angeles, California. "It takes letting go and the willingness to go outside the box; the magic happens outside of your comfort zone. It evolves and you have to take risks, and the reward is very fulfilling."

Anthony Barzilai Freund, 1stdibs editorial director and director of fine art, described today's Bohemian look as a mixing of cultures and textures but in a highly edited way that's not cluttered. "In your home, you could have a chunky [Tramp Art mirror](#) paired with a poetic black-and-white landscape by Japanese photographer Hideoki in one room, for instance, and in the next you could hang a trippy 1970s print by Peter Max above an ecstatic mandala sculpture by Mexican artist Juana Martínez," he explained.

Photo: Abstract art and a feature fireplace define the unique look and feel of a home designed by Sara Simon president of Handsome Salt Interior Design. *Courtesy of dasMOD*



## The Art of Display

An array of curio sets the collected tone in the home of Benoist F. Drut, owner of Maison Gerard Gallery in New York.  
Photo: Michael Mundy

Since Bohemian style is all around, there are no limitations on where to put art and collectibles. It can be featured in bookshelves, on coffee tables, placed underfoot or stretched over a canvas and hung on the wall. “I especially love when people collect a series of objects, such as African jewelry, for example, and then place them in a shadow box and hang them on the wall,” Ms. Babcock said. “There is a return to finding pieces that have meaning, and not just buying something because it looks pretty. There is usually a story or memory behind the art that people get excited about—and, it can be more affordable than fine art.”

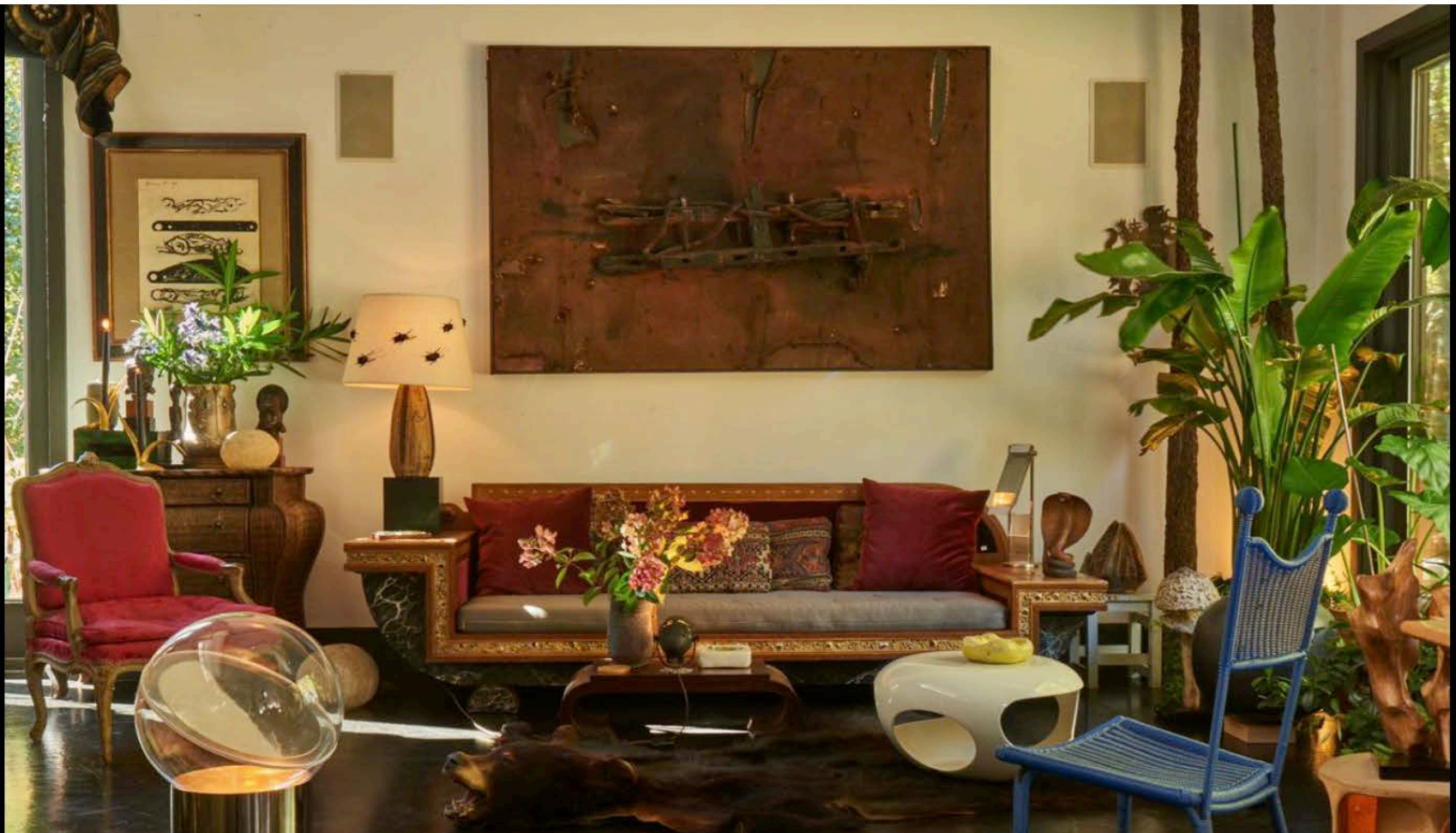
New York-based-designer Phillip Thomas recently completed a project in which he created a layered space filled with color and exuberance, “where objects of all sorts were elevated to the order of art by the way in which they were presented.” In the apartment, he mounted and framed a Burmese textile as art above the console table. “The artistry of the textile is so stunning that it is a work of art in itself,” he said.



Mixing and matching genres, media and artforms is key to creating the aesthetic. The idea is to spark a conversation among items that people don't necessarily expect to see together, Mr. Tenzer said. "Hang a Warhol print next to a drawing by a young artist, a movie poster, a family photo or something you picked up at a thrift store," he said. "I love hanging pieces in a salon or parlor style where every inch of wall space is covered by diverse works."



Benoist F. Drut, owner of Maison Gerard Gallery in New York, displays varied objects and artwork all around his home to create a look and feel that's lived in. Photo: Michael Mundy





"There should be no rules when it comes to the pieces, be it value, period, style, color, or material," said Benoist F. Drut, owner of Maison Gerard Gallery in New York. Here, he conveys that sentiment in the living areas of his home.  
*Photo: Michael Mundy*



"The Frog and The Princess" by Bob Thompson. *Courtesy of Sotheby's*

## Treasure Hunting

Bohemian chic art is an evolution of a life well lived, so objects can be found anywhere—in your travels, at a thrift shop or from a local artist. Mr. Tenzer recommends going to galleries and museums to understand what your eye responds to and then browsing online sites like Artsy and Artnet. "Once you have a better sense of what interests you, you can buy through galleries, auctions or even artists

directly on their website or through Instagram—some artists are very open to hearing from collectors this way."

Ms. Babcock advised checking out pop-up ateliers such as Field and Supply in Kingston, New York, which is held twice a year and features works from modern craftsmen. She also suggests perusing sites like and Art Design Carta. "The internet and social media platforms, such as Instagram, give many artists (and collectors) wider access," she said. Ms. Simon also urges

looking at Instagram for hunting down new artists and one-of-a-kind pieces. “I constantly scour through Instagram for new artists or designers that are creating something fun and fresh. It’s all about utilizing your resources, especially the ones that are right in the palm of your hand.”

Local artisan shows, where a variety of artists display their pieces, are another good way to go. “Last June I attended a small local event in Sag Harbor, New York, where I met Peter Spacek, a local artist, who has reinvented the art of scrimshaw, which he calls Scratch. He carves beautiful illustrations using the same techniques as sailors and whalers only on non-traditional surfaces such as discarded surfboards,” Ms. Babcock said. “You never know what you might find and what speaks to you until you see it.”