

IN THE PRESENT MIX MASTER

The antiques are anything but old-fashioned in Andrew Spindler-Roesle's shop

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A GUIDING SENSIBILITY IS EVIDENT as soon as one steps into the small shop in coastal Essex on Boston's North Shore. This is the atelier of Andrew Spindler-Roesle, a life-long collector—or, as he would have it, “accumulator”—of an eclectic range of objects and art of the past five centuries. After training at Sotheby's in London and working for a New York City dealer of 18th- and 19th-century European furniture, he opened his own consultancy and gallery, giving his distinctive tastes free reign. He is also an overseer at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and a member of the Collections Committee of Historic New England. We asked him for his views on the antiques world today, and about what excites him as a collector.

What inspires you, in the world of antiques or design? I'm very inspired by objects that cross time periods, things that might be ancient or they might be from the 18th or the 19th century but read as somehow very graphic and modern.

Are there objects that make you laugh? The faux-bois huge master teapot [RIGHT] makes me smile because the scale is so unexpected, the design and pattern are so unexpected; it looks like it's having an identity crisis. It wants to be wood but it's pottery, and it wants to be a teapot but it's on steroids. I like objects that have wit and weight.

What criteria do you use when you're buying? I buy systematically, but I don't consider myself a collector—I'm a very subjective, discriminating accumulator. I'll go kind of crazy on one thing and collect it in depth. In general, what I look for is really good form, objects that are very sculptural, that are bold and have guts. And good design—things that are well-proportioned and well-made. I dislike things that are pretentious or overly gilded and dripping in crystal. ▶

WITTY AND SINGULAR, AN OVERSIZE 19th-century English master teapot with a transferware faux-grain design has a graphic quality. It rests on a 19th-century rush-bottom chair; an armoire with aged patina creates a backdrop.



What are you buying today that you wouldn't have bought yesterday? I don't look left and right too much. Of course I keep customers in mind, but I really only buy what I like. I see pieces every day that I could resell but I just won't touch—gooey, rococo revival things, or more common Victorian furniture, or frilly hyperdecorated things. I think less is more. To me, these pieces lack integrity. What I *am* buying now that used to be less acceptable is 20th-century design. Lucite pieces, for instance, which can be wonderful. I'm very drawn to it, but ten years ago I might not have been so interested in things from the seventies.

The way you combine things suggests a certain irreverence toward period style. I wouldn't say it's irreverence. I really do respect period style. However, doing an interior that's all of one period is dull, unless one is doing it at the highest level. Beauty comes in many forms, and to find affinities between objects based purely on their visual form, their color, their design, means you have a holistic approach to what is beautiful. You might have a Regency chair that works with an item from the 1960s or something Baroque, because there is a commonality of form that has nothing to do with the places or times in which they were made. It's a slightly romantic, poetic viewpoint.

Has the antiques market changed a lot? Has it gravitated toward this holistic view? It's changed enormously. There aren't as many great collectors, and they're often at the very top of the market. What's driving the antiques world today is a younger clientele that's very interested in contemporary art, in decoration and design. People can find great design in a lot of new places, like chain stores and catalogues. To a certain extent, antiques are being used as accessories—someone might do an all-contemporary interior, then have a fantastic antique chair or object.

There are so many different forces now. The Internet has changed the market; buyers come in armed with all kinds of online information. *Antiques Roadshow* has had an effect—it's wonderful that people are better educated and interested, but they often have a distorted sense of an object's value. Actually seeing something and having a relationship with the person you're buying from—nothing will ever replace that.

Does a piece dictate a room design, or does a room dictate a piece for you? I'm very object-oriented, so I would say a piece dictates a design. But I've



always maintained that beautiful things of all periods and places can go together. I mean, no one is doing an 1820 room anymore, but you might find an incredible color in an 1820 piece that you want to do a whole room around.

In terms of design, is there something distinctive about the East Coast? Definitely. The taste is really different here. The encroaching threat of McMansions and townhouses and homogenization is far less prevalent in New England than elsewhere in the country. There is not the same kind of sprawl here, because of New England's history, and because of the aesthetic and cultural values of the people who live here. ■

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SHAPES DETERMINE GROUPINGS in Andrew's shop. (1) An agate box varies the rounded forms of a 1920s Art Deco vase, an old scale, and a milk-glass candy dish. (2) A circa-1930s limed-oak credenza holds a 19th-century English basalt teapot and two putti lamps. (3) A mid-20th-century umbrella stand shares a perch with a 19th-century cast-iron urn. (4) Andrew Spindler-Roesle poses beside a circa-1901 bust. (5) Antique paste shoe buckles rest on marquetry boxes, near jewel-tone newel post heads.