

# CABANA

Loewe







Room view: marble-effect stucco decoration, Guanahata table by Jorge Zalszupin, chairs by Claudio Salocchi, wood sculpture by Enzo Mari

## Collecting More and More

*Christoph Radl* talks to architect, decorator and collector *Charles Zana* about his passion for objects, crossing the line between designing and collecting and Noah's Ark.

*Christoph Radl: I never really had a passion for collecting anything so I'm always very curious about—and also a bit jealous of—people who find fulfillment in amassing things. How did you start collecting?*

Charles Zana: I started collecting very young, following in my father's footsteps. He collected furniture from the '30s and '50s. When I was 20, I bought a Venini vase from one of his favorite galleries. Then, for more than 20 years, I bought pieces from time to time. One day, I had a kind of revela-

tion in the Fiera Milano when I discovered the Branzi collection at Design Gallery Milano. I could not decide which piece in the collection was my favorite so I bought the full set. That was the beginning of the end.

*CR: Maybe we can say that Noah was the archetypal collector when he preserved the living creatures on his ark from destruction. When you started collecting has it been with a similar motivation: you wanted to protect certain objects from vanishing?*





From left: detail of the restored seventeenth-century terrazzo; chair by Claudio Salocchi and stucco walls; detail of lock and walnut marquetry

CZ: Noah preserved only one of each kind of the creatures. In a sense, a collector usually wants to collect more and more pieces from one artist or style. To me, this is the difference between a collector and an art connoisseur.

*CR: I have a friend who used to be a collector of contemporary art but at a certain moment he understood that he would never be able to earn as much as he needed to satisfy his passion so he changed his life and became a gallerist. You started collecting contemporary design very early, did you become an architect and interior designer so you could combine your passion with your profession?*

CZ: In a way I satisfy my passion through my clients' collections. It is always a wonderful and delicious pleasure to install a collection in a house or for an exhibition—for a time the pieces are yours. I discovered in my profession that to install a collection you must understand it, feel it and, in the end appreciate it. You have to work on understanding it, its history and its associations.

Every year in the studio we curate and design exhibitions. I love to change what we do and move across the frontier between architecture and collecting with exhibitions such as "Vasi et Fiori" at the Musée Delacroix or "Dialogo" in the Olivetti showroom designed by Carlo Scarpa in Venice. We are current-

ly working on an exhibition called "Made In Italy" with Tornabuoni Arte Gallery. The exhibition will explore the relationship between art and design in Italy between 1950 and 1980.

*CR: You have designed many houses of collectors. In these projects do you aim to enhance the collection or focus on the habitable aspect of the environment?*

CZ: When we design houses, we start with on one hand the plan, volume and flow and on the other the collection. I always say that I don't want to decide between art and function.

*CR: Your projects are usually clean and minimalistic and are somehow the opposite of what I would call Cabana-inspired, but sometimes I have the feeling that your choices of materials—poor and rich—and their pairings have a surprisingly gemütlich aspect. Do you ever use patterns and decorations in your homes?*

CZ: Yes we love patterns. I use often Josef Frank fabrics. They were designed in the '30s. I love to mix those fabrics with vintage furniture. We also now work with African vintage textiles.

*All images courtesy Charles Zana, Paris*