

Sotheby's



A FRESH TAKE ON
OLD MASTERS

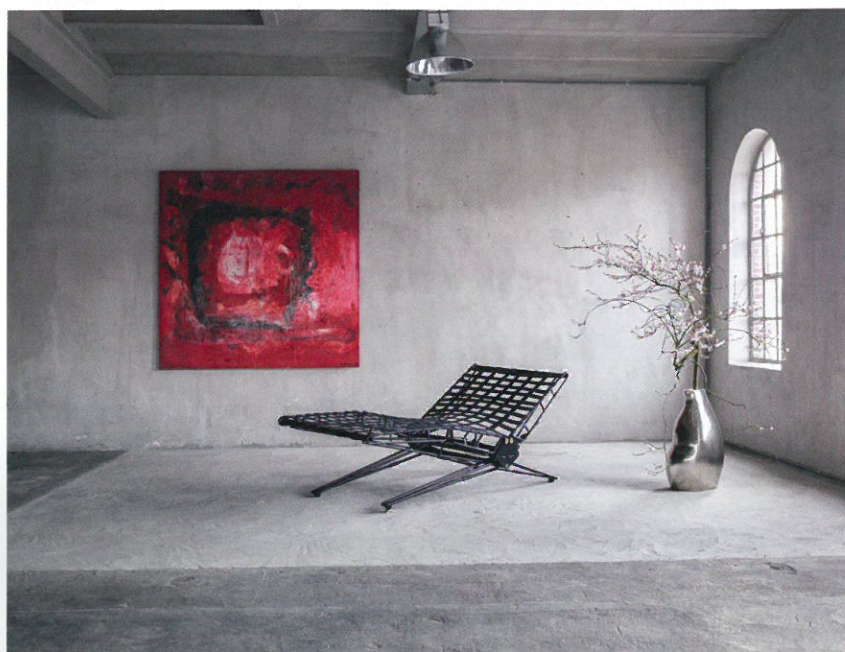
INDIA'S CULTURAL
CAPITALS

A CENTURY OF
CHÂTEAU MOUTON
ROTHSCHILD

AXEL VERVOORDT'S

ENLIGHTENED
INTERIORS





What was your first memorable experience with art? Perhaps it was in a museum, where so many of us are awakened to the mysterious power of art to move us and inhabit our thoughts long after we leave the gallery. Or maybe it was in a darkened classroom, where images by famous artists flashed on the screen while a teacher shared the knowledge of their histories and meanings.

Surely the best way to experience art – indeed, to fall in love with it – is to bring it into your home and let it reveal itself over time. In this issue we profile several people who have brought the integration of art and life to new levels. One leading practitioner is the Belgian designer Axel Vervoordt, whose virtuoso interiors with art, furniture, light and space achieve perfect balance; the spectacular photo above and on the cover are from residences in the Kanaal, his ambitious real estate development near Antwerp, which offers an aesthetically charged lifestyle to a large community. We are grateful that he took time out to share his philosophy with Brook Mason (page 46).

A much-admired figure on the contemporary art circuit, Beth Rudin DeWoody has made adventurous art an intrinsic part of her life for more than four decades. James Reginato caught up with the effervescent collector as the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, Florida prepares to open an exhibition showcasing her unique vision. In advance of the opening, she allowed us a glimpse into her art-filled home – where her husband, the celebrated photographer Firooz Zahedi, took an exclusive portrait for this issue (page 36).

With the New Year, we are introducing two additional features to the magazine. The first will bring you to some of the world's leading destinations, starting with Mumbai and Delhi, the twin cultural capitals of a surging Indian art scene (page 60). The second celebrates extraordinary properties that are currently available through Sotheby's International Realty (page 32). These residences are certain to inspire dreaming; one of them may even turn out to be the perfect home for you and your art. —THE EDITORS

Cover: An Axel Vervoordt-designed interior with Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Lightning Fields* 236.
This page: Vervoordt's signature mix of East and West, old and a new in a Kanaal residence.

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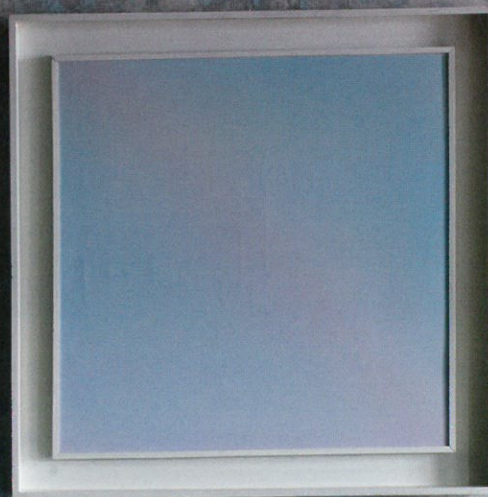
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AESTHETIC ALCHEMY

As enlightened A-list designer Axel Vervoordt launches an ambitious new project that embodies his masterfully harmonious and seemingly effortless style, **Brook Mason** talks with the designer about how he conjures his magic.



Interior designer, dealer of art and antiques, incalculably influential style-setter and visionary curator Axel Vervoordt has inspired a nearly cult-like following. If pairing a contemporary abstract painting with a 17th-century Dutch table and Chinese ceramics now seems commonplace, Vervoordt did it first. With his wife, May, and their sons Boris and Dick, the 66-year-old impresario has launched contemporary art galleries in Antwerp and Hong Kong, developed lines of furniture and fabrics, curated exhibitions and launched a real estate venture, all the while consistently delivering his sought-after services as master decorator to a devoted clientele. For decades, a string of bold-faced names have beaten a path to his door: Sting, Bill Gates, Kanye West, Calvin Klein and Dries van Noten to name just a few. What are they seeking? Vervoordt's rare sense of serenity and contemplation, which he achieves through juxtapositions of ancient and contemporary, Eastern and Western, all arrayed with exacting attention to scale and proportion.

Notable among recent clients are Robert De Niro and Ira Drukier, co-owners of the Greenwich Hotel in Tribeca, where Vervoordt has created a penthouse. With its rustic wood beams and touches of antique Flemish linen, the serene hotel suite perched above busy lower Manhattan integrates city and country. That seamless duality is in keeping with the ethos of Vervoordt's latest and most ambitious project: the Kanaal, a vast multi-use complex in a restored 19th-century liquor distillery fifteen minutes from Antwerp. For the past ten years, the Kanaal has housed the designer's offices and numerous showrooms, which will remain there as the new development rolls out gradually.

Already some of the 98 loft-style residences have been snapped up; there are also design studios, workshops and orchards in addition to practical amenities like a dry cleaner and day-care centre as well as a branch of famed Parisian bakery Poilâne. At the centre of this community is Vervoordt's foundation and a museum devoted to his extensive collection of art, antiques, antiquities and design, set to open in 2016.

Meanwhile, a team of 100 specialists, architects, curators and others are busy managing a slew of international projects, from a vast country estate outside Moscow to private museums in Rome, Tokyo and Spain. As the Vervoordt empire grows, demand for the Vervoordt lifestyle is unlikely to abate.



MOST DESIGNERS ARE DEFINED BY A STYLE. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURS?

I have been guided by the Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi, which embraces simplicity and the art of imperfection. Frequently there is an objet trouvé in a space, such as a centuries-old chestnut door salvaged from an abandoned building. The total design is a series of dialogues. And warmth and a sense of reflection are achieved.

THAT SOUNDS A BIT LIKE WHAT YOU ARE AIMING FOR WITH THE KANAAL PROJECT.

While respecting and preserving the existing industrial heritage of the place and its period distillery buildings, I want to give it a purpose towards the future. Kanaal is evolving very quickly now – the first residents are moving in this winter and the gardens are nearly finished.

YOUR ATELIER IS RIGHT THERE – WILL YOU FURNISH THE INTERIORS OF THE LOFT APARTMENTS?

In some cases our design offices will help the owners but not all of them.

(Above) Axel Vervoordt.

(Opposite) A kitchen at Kanaal, with Jef Verheyen's painting *Espace transposé. Flandre* (1970) above an 18th-century polychromed table with a Japanese earthenware vase by Shiro Tsujimura.



WHAT OTHER ELEMENTS ARE PLANNED FOR KANAAL?

We are preparing for the completion of the Vervoordt Foundation Museum, which will open next year. Alongside antiques, *kunstkamer* objects, antiquities and design will be works by Anish Kapoor, Kazuo Shiraga and other Gutai artists, and ZERO Group artists.

YOU WERE AN EARLY CHAMPION OF THE ZERO GROUP, WHICH IS COMMANDING ATTENTION INTERNATIONALLY. WHAT DO YOU FIND COMPELLING ABOUT THE ART?

I've long been drawn to avant-garde movements and I was a friend of Jef Verheyen, a [Belgian] member of ZERO. Verheyen, Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein and many other ZERO artists were also interested in Japan for philosophical reasons. Their work is about understanding the void and the connection with the earth and the cosmos.

YOU ARE KNOWN FOR UNEXPECTED, YET HARMONIOUS PAIRINGS OF ART AND OBJECTS – WHAT OVERALL EFFECT ARE YOU HOPING TO ACHIEVE WITH THESE UNIQUE COMBINATIONS?

When [clients'] art along with work by other artists is integrated with antiquities and Asian art such as sandstone Buddhas, 18th-century Italian refectory tables and design pieces like iconic Jean Prouvé chairs, there is an ongoing dialogue of past and present, East and West, which leads to

reflection. That intellectual setting offers inspiration, but comfort is never an issue.

WHAT ARE YOUR SOURCES FOR ART AND DECORATIVE OBJECTS?

We frequent dealers, fairs and auctions. We now source close to 30 per cent of what we use from Asia. In Japan, we recently purchased porcelain Moon jars, and while we were in Korea, we snapped up contemporary Raku tea bowls. From the recent sale of the Schlumberger collection at Sotheby's, we acquired Vassilakis Takis's kinetic sculpture *Musicale* for our Foundation museum.

WHY THE PRONOUNCED EMPHASIS ON NATURAL LIGHT? IT SEEMS LIKE A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN YOUR INTERIORS.

Quite simply *Luxe est leu*, light is law. That element of nature leads to enlightenment.

AND YOUR ADVICE FOR COLLECTORS?

I tell them to avoid the decorative and be inspired by genuine artists and authentic materials from oak sideboards to earthenware pottery. Natural elements from light to slate are essential. Study museum collections and exhibitions.

Brook S. Mason is US Correspondent for *The Art Newspaper* and contributes regularly to *Cultured* and *The New York Times*.



(Clockwise from top) A Kanaal loft featuring works by Gutai artists, a sofa and chairs from the Axel Vervoordt Home Collection and a round table by Jules Wabbes; another Kanaal interior with a 1987 painting by Günther Uecker and a Vervoordt-designed table; the Greenwich Hotel penthouse.