

The Art Salad



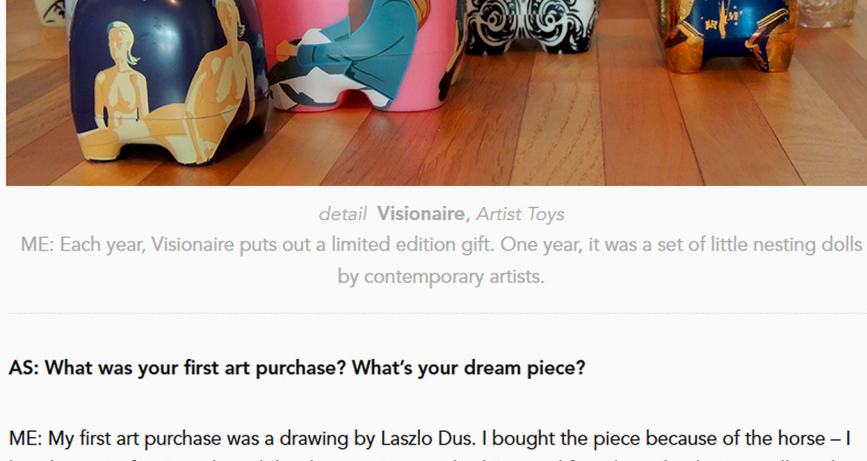
Mario Elcid

Mario Elcid is a world traveler and demure art collector. He made a successful transition from architecture to interior design as a founder of one the most innovative showrooms in New York City, Mondo Collection. The Art Salad met him at his uber-chic space in the Flatiron District.

AS: Tell us about your background. Do you remember your first interaction with art?

ME: I grew up in Lebanon, so my first interaction with art was there. Lebanon is a crossroads of so many cultural influences and art: Islamic art, the Ottoman Empire, French, and Arabic art. I was really young though and I didn't take as much time to appreciate it as I should have.

I'd say my first really memorable experience was when I moved to Detroit to work for an architectural firm. My first project was at the Detroit Institute of Arts and the first time I entered the museum to see the project site, I walked into the Diego Rivera courtyard and was immediately overwhelmed – it was such an amazing experience to see it in real life. I worked on the project for two years, and every single time I entered the DIA, there was something new around the corner. It was incredible.



detail Visionaire, Artist Toys

ME: Each year, Visionaire puts out a limited edition gift. One year, it was a set of little nesting dolls by contemporary artists.

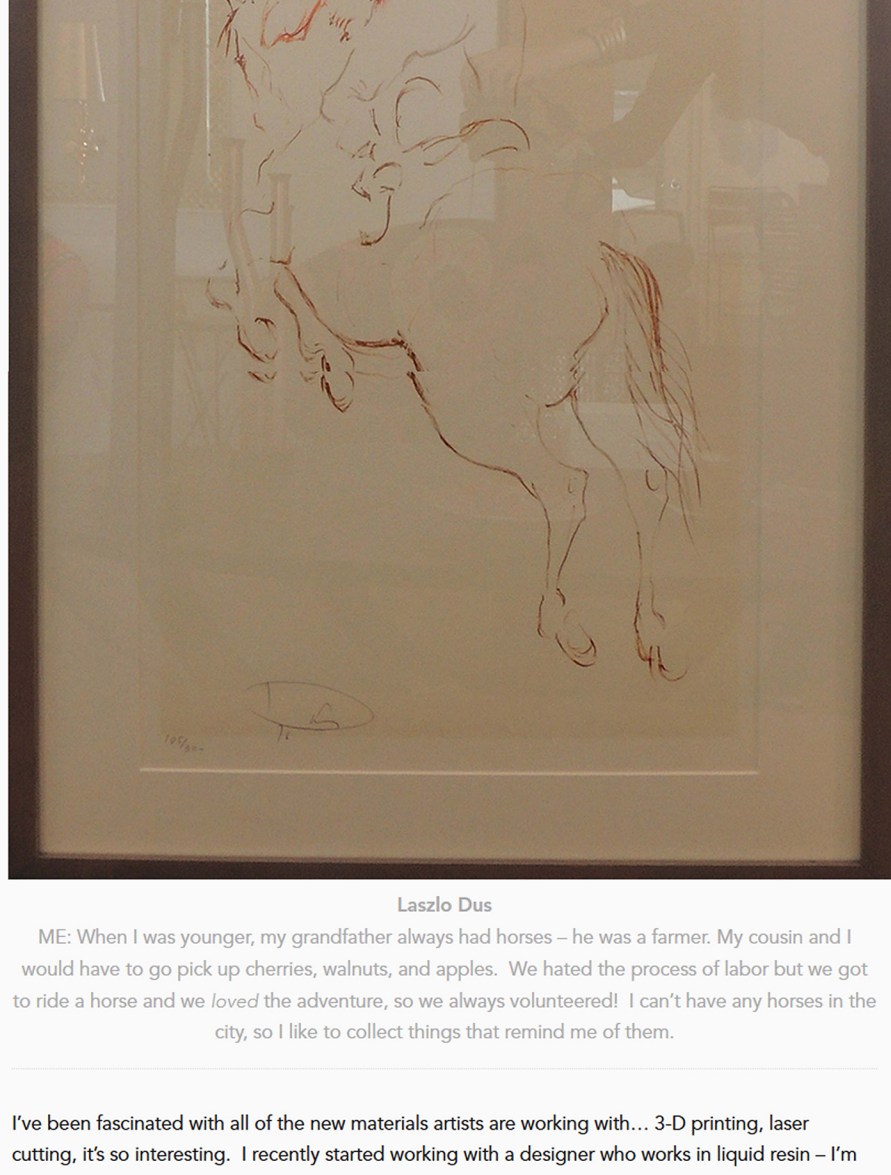
AS: What was your first art purchase? What's your dream piece?

ME: My first art purchase was a drawing by Laszlo Dus. I bought the piece because of the horse – I love horses! After I purchased the drawing, I researched Dus and found out that he's actually in the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art] and Smithsonian permanent collections.

I have a couple dream pieces. The first one is a woodcut by Lichtenstein: *Imperfect* #220. I like the fact that it's a little different than his better-known paintings. I would also love anything by Zaha Hadid. She's doing a line with Lalique and I have a big birthday coming up [smiles]...

AS: What does your collection say about you? What pieces do you tend to gravitate towards?

ME: I have three common themes that I like to buy: architecture and travel, horses, and recently, I've started buying more religious art.



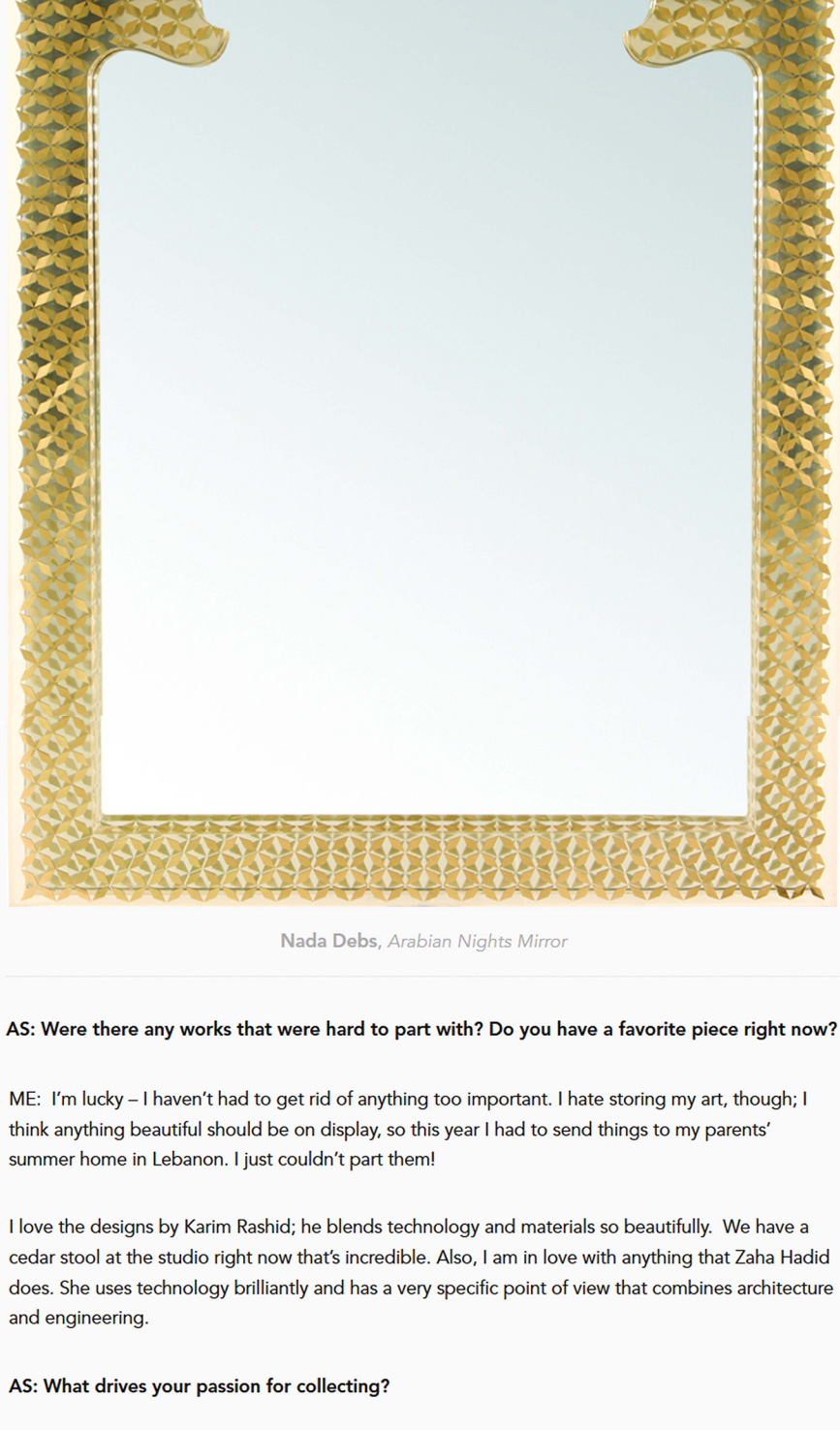
Laszlo Dus

ME: When I was younger, my grandfather always had horses – he was a farmer. My cousin and I would have to go pick up cherries, walnuts, and apples. We hated the process of labor but we got to ride a horse and we loved the adventure, so we always volunteered! I can't have any horses in the city, so I like to collect things that remind me of them.

I've been fascinated with all of the new materials artists are working with... 3-D printing, laser cutting, it's so interesting. I recently started working with a designer who works in liquid resin – I'm falling in love with it!

AS: How has your collection changed over the years?

ME: [Laughs] Check back with me in ten years, I feel like my collection is still new! I started collecting drawings and now I am more into objects – furniture and small decorative pieces.



Nada Debs, Arabian Nights Mirror

AS: Were there any works that were hard to part with? Do you have a favorite piece right now?

ME: I'm lucky – I haven't had to get rid of anything too important. I hate storing my art, though; I think anything beautiful should be on display, so this year I had to send things to my parents' summer home in Lebanon. I just couldn't part them!

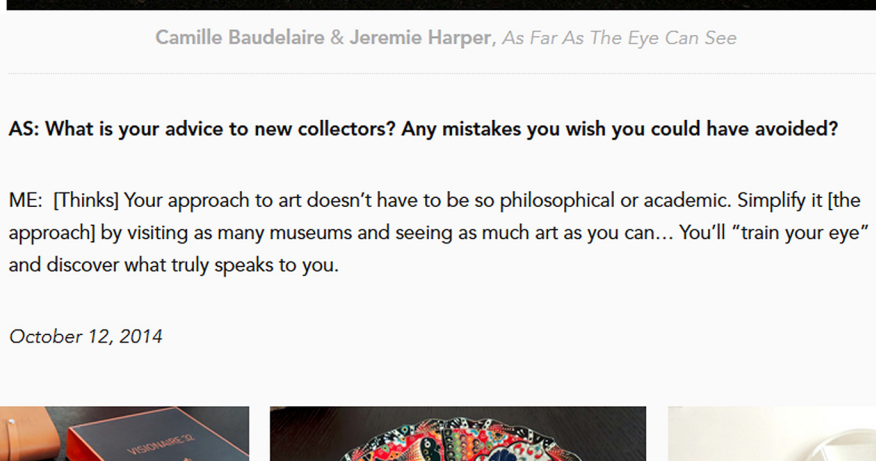
I love the designs by Karim Rashid; he blends technology and materials so beautifully. We have a cedar stool at the studio right now that's incredible. Also, I am in love with anything that Zaha Hadid does. She uses technology brilliantly and has a very specific point of view that combines architecture and engineering.

AS: What drives your passion for collecting?

ME: It's really based on a piece-by-piece case. I never buy anything because of a name or a buzz.... It has to mean something special to me. I live in New York so there's not an abundance of space and I like to display what I own, so I have to really connect with each work.

AS: If you weren't collecting art, what would you be doing? Do you have any other hobbies that fulfill you as much as collecting?

ME: I love photography and really wish I had more time to develop this practice. I also run a business, so that takes up a lot of my time, but it's very fulfilling.



Camille Baudelaire & Jeremie Harper, As Far As The Eye Can See

AS: What is your advice to new collectors? Any mistakes you wish you could have avoided?

ME: [Thinks] Your approach to art doesn't have to be so philosophical or academic. Simplify it [the approach] by visiting as many museums and seeing as much art as you can... You'll "train your eye" and discover what truly speaks to you.

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