



ANTIQUES

Big Time

by Ann Sample

A MANHATTAN-BASED DESIGNER CREATES MAGIC IN STAMFORD

“The rooms I design have to have a bit of magic to them—that’s what gives them life,” says Gerald Charles Tolomeo. A favorite magic trick of this Manhattan-based interior designer is playing with scale. “I love adding large accessories to rooms because they are so unexpected,” he says. The designer, who has been practicing in the tri-state area for twenty years, is formally trained in the discipline, having received interior design and art history degrees from FIT and Montclair State University, respectively. He also studied decorative arts at the Sorbonne. His resume is impressive, but his style, a sophisticated blend of periods with a generous dose of whimsy, demonstrates an innate talent.

When Tolomeo is looking for striking items, he often heads to the antique warehouses in Stamford. Two of his favorites are Hamptons Antique Galleries and the Antique and Artisan Center. “For me, it’s one-stop shopping,” he says. “These warehouses are filled with interesting, well-priced product. It’s always worth the trip from Manhattan.” He recently took CTC&G along on one of his shopping trips.

At the **Hamptons Antique Galleries** (735 Canal St., Stamford, 203-325-4019), Tolomeo is first drawn to a pair of four-foot-tall carved swan decoys from the last century. He envisions them perched on a chrome and glass console table in a cleanly designed entry. An alternative use would be in a more rustic setting, perhaps in front of a fireplace during the warmer months. “I love pieces that are versatile and can work in modern as well as country settings,” says Tolomeo.

A pair of vintage, cherry-red lacquered tables is the next bit of whimsy that appeals to Tolomeo. He would place them about three feet apart in front of a carved French settee. “They are small, so by placing them in front of a sofa you are playing with scale. But the combination works because of their strong color, which lends the tables power,” he explains. The table legs have a modern



Size Matters | At Hamptons Antique Galleries, interior designer Gerald Charles Tolomeo fell for a pair of vintage cherry-red lacquered tables. Because of their small size, Tolomeo would pair them with a larger piece to play with scale.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY NEIL LANDINO, JR.

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Fake Out | Tolomeo (ABOVE) liked the versatility of a pair of four-foot-tall, 20th-century American swan decoys (LEFT) at Hamptons Antique Galleries. "They'd work just as well in a country setting as they would a clean and modern one," he says.



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Go High, Go Low | Midcentury armchairs with ebonized frames at Hamptons Antique Galleries combine low seats with high backs for an extreme design statement that fits in with Tolomeo's style of combining dissimilar scales.

version of the classic carved ball and claw feet, which Tolomeo believes allows them to work in a contemporary or traditional setting. "In a contemporary setting they would add a burst of color and in a traditional setting, a spark of interest."

The last items that appeal to Tolomeo in the gallery demonstrate an inherent play of scale: a pair of midcentury armchairs with ebonized frames. "I love armchairs that have very low seats paired with very high backs," he says. "This extreme makes such a statement." The designer says he would put them in front of a fireplace, facing them head to head with a low table in between. Or he might go a little bit more modern. "Those would look great on either side of a Plexiglas table or, for an ethnic look, a Laotian rain drum."

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Go Folksy | At the Antique and Artisan Center, Tolomeo goes wild for a vintage wooden figure made by Buffalo folk artist Anthony Marfoggia (ABOVE). "It would be an interesting contrast if placed in a minimal space," he says. The designer also seeks out this large hand-painted wood mirror from Brussels (RIGHT) at the Antique and Artisan Center. The colorful piece, according to the Tolomeo, would look great as a piece of art in a grand foyer.



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In the **Antique and Artisan Center** (69 Jefferson St., Stamford, 203-327-6022), Tolomeo's interest is piqued by a series of large accessories. The first, a giant, wood-framed mirror, is decorated with blue and gold peacocks and foliage-filled urns. "It's fantastic!" he says. "Its painting has a funky vintage look to it that makes it very interesting and playful." Tolomeo would use it as a piece of art and place it in a grand foyer with a black and white checkered floor. He says he would complete the scene with a Mies van der Rohe daybed or Le Corbusier chairs. "The foyer would have a classic modern look and the painted mirror would add the snap that is needed for a little personality."

The next is another hard-to-miss item: a large, 20th-century sunburst mirror. "This type of mirror is popular, but this reinvents the look by its enormous size and the silver leaf, as opposed to the typical gold finish," says Tolomeo. He would hang it in a simply designed living room, one that's rich in texture but light in color. "This mirror would enhance a clean atmosphere with subtle-toned colors," he says. "It would be the room's main accessory. I wouldn't add too many others."

Lastly, a vintage wooden figure made by Buffalo folk artist Anthony Marfoggia attracts Tolomeo. "It's a rustic piece that I would love in an austere, Philip Johnson-inspired environment with lots of windows," he says. "The figure would add the interest that a severe yet beautifully designed room needs." Tolomeo also envisions it in a more comfortable setting among reclaimed wooden planks and linen-upholstered sofas. "The folksy figure would fit in this setting but would still be striking; the standout piece among the subtle texture of the flooring and fabrics," he says. ●



Ray of Light | Also at the *Antique and Artisan Center* a 20th-century carved sunburst mirror has a unique silver leaf, as opposed to a typical gold finish.