

Inside Brazilian Design Dealer Ulysses De Santi's Los Angeles Abode



An interior view of Ulysses De Santi's home in Los Angeles. On the floor is a piece by Brazilian contemporary artist Rodrigo Cass; two blue Martin Eisler's 'Reversivel' chairs from the sixties. In the dining room in back is a table with a Rosewood top and two suede covered concrete bases from the sixties by Jorge Zalszupin; a large painting by Svenja Deininger and next to it are two Lucas Arruda paintings. On top of the white credenza are two Larry Bell cubes - one is the smallest that the artist has ever made

17
June
2019

Brazilian design dealer Ulysses De Santi opens up his Los Angeles home revealing the power and beauty of his Brazilian design objects

Widely known for as an award-winning television producer and actor in his hometown of São Paulo, Brazil, little did anyone know that Ulysses De Santi always had a love for Brazilian furniture. Inside De Santi's home, a colourful plethora of design objects dwell.

Found in bold cuts and materials, especially incorporating different types of wood, these objects have an innate sophistication and power. They are coupled with eminent pieces of contemporary artwork by the likes of Marc Quinn, Frank Bowling, Anselm Kiefer, Louise Bourgeois and Larry Bell. The list goes on.



Ulysses De Santi inside his LA home. Courtesy of Maryam Eisler

The design pieces, largely by Brazilian names, exude a unique presence – they almost seem to be alive. Some of the most standout pieces include cube chairs by Jorge Zalszupin and a ‘Grasseli’ shelf by Sergio Rodrigues, both from the sixties, and a brilliant long red oval-shaped sofa by contemporary Brazilian brand Neobox. The house lives and breathes through its art and design.



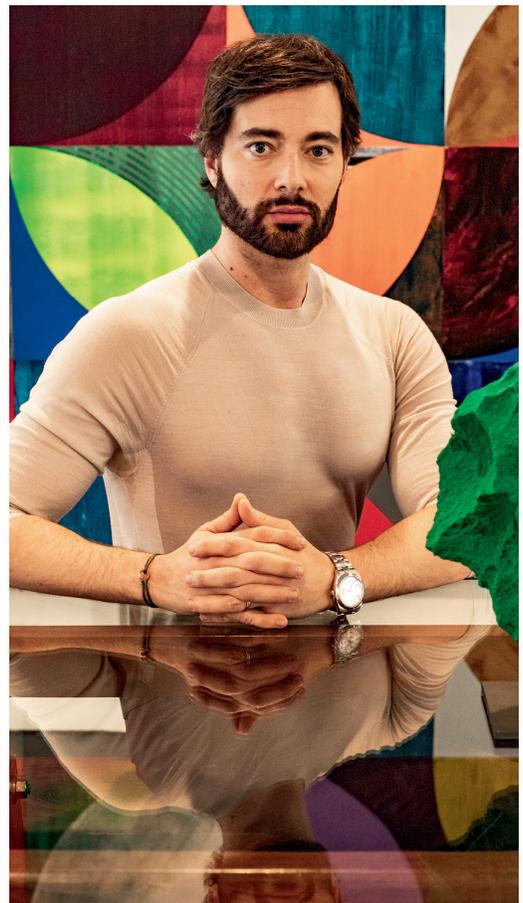
*A painting by Frank Bowling next to a chair by Gaetano Pesce.
Courtesy of Maryam Eisler*

Growing up in Brazil De Santi fell in love early on with his uncle's 'Mole' chair by Rodrigues and a tea trolley by Zalszupin that he spotted at a friend's house. He began, during early adulthood, to redesign his family's homes. He was surrounded by objects reflecting Modernismo Brasileiro and design became his passion, alongside, of course, his decade-long career as an actor and a producer. "When I moved to Los Angeles in 2015 I brought all of my furniture," he says.



Inside Ulysses De Santi's home. Courtesy of Maryam Eisler

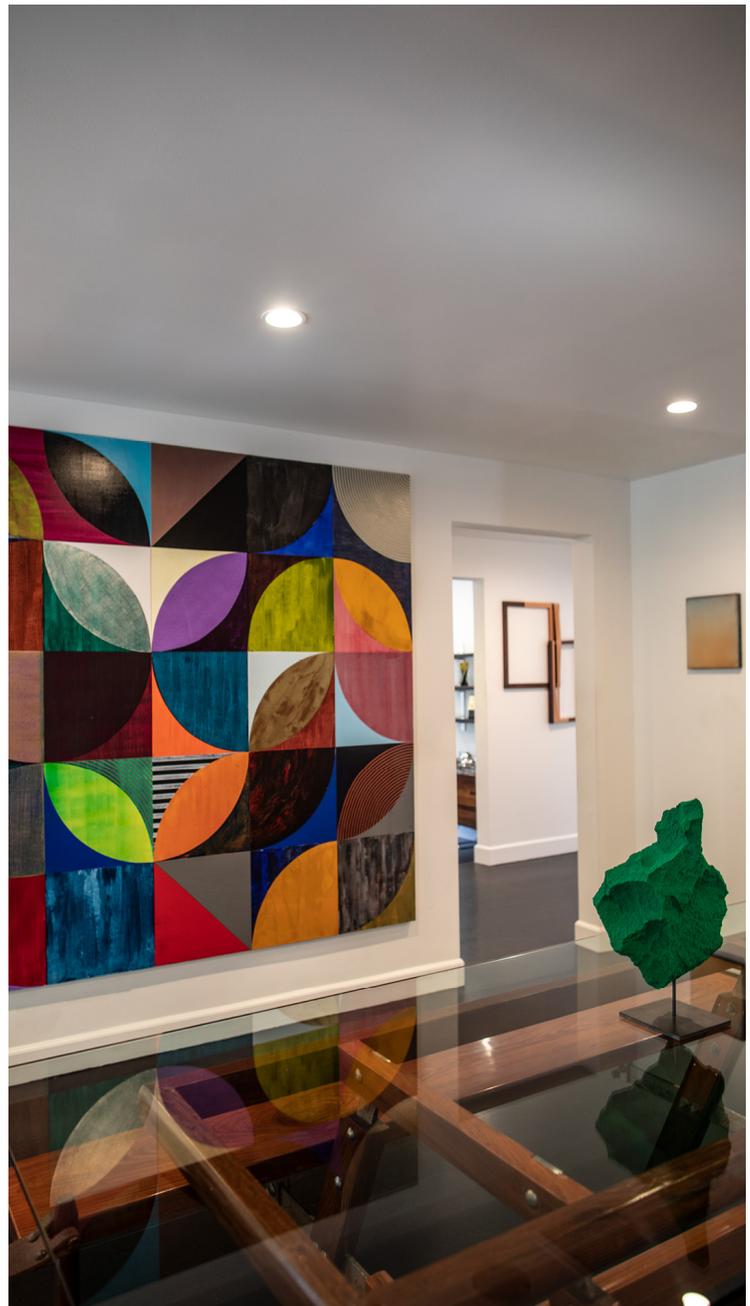
"I was always an actor by trade but design has always been my biggest passion in life. I've always collected and loved the period of Brazilian modernism. Pieces from that period have always looked more like sculptures and artwork than furniture. I've always been fascinated about the beauty and art behind design." His first house in Los Angeles was almost entirely Brazilian with mid-century modern furniture.



Ulysses in front of a work by Brazilian artist Luiz Zerbini. Courtesy of Maryam Eisler

“Friends and clients would come to the house and were immediately fascinated by the pieces and it was happening so often that I decided three years ago that I would go to Brazil and gather a few pieces together and do a presentation in Los Angeles,” he recalls.

Soon after he met his partner Cecilia Tanure who was previously the director of eminent Brazilian galleries Mendes Wood DM in São Paulo and A Gentil Carioca in Rio de Janeiro. “She walked into my house and was like ‘I have those chairs, I have that coffee table,’ and we immediately knew that we were meant to work together.”



*Inside Ulysses De Santi's home.
Courtesy of Maryam Eisler*

Soon after, in 2016, the two launched the pop-up Studio 55 in West Hollywood. A play on Studio 54, the number 55 refers to the Brazilian country code. The two had spent the previous spring sourcing items from numerous firms, including Joaquim Tenreiro, Jorge Zalszupin, Carlo Hauner and Martin Eisler's FORMA.

"The presentation was a huge success and we sold most of the pieces," he says, telling how many of the works went to art collectors that have remained clients. "They immediately understood who the designers were and the references and what we were doing."



A view of the living room showing a blue cyanotype by Christian Marclay; a painting by Frank Bowling on easel; a tea trolley and cube chairs from the sixties by Jorge Zalszupin; a coffee table by contemporary designer Jacqueline Terpins, placed on top is a piece by Lucas Simões, the red sofa is by Neobox, a Brazilian contemporary design firm and next to it is a Sérgio Rodrigues 'Janete' side table from the fifties. Courtesy of Maryam Eisler

Since then, the pair have tried to host two to three pop ups a year, with one always taking place in Los Angeles, another in American city, and the last in an international city. Last year marked the first time they staged the pop up internationally taking their presentation to Hong Kong.

"It was one of the first times that Brazilian modern design was shown in Asia and the audience was very receptive," he says. "We want to take our presentation to different countries and different spaces, from art galleries to decorating apartments."



Ulysses stands in front of a Marc Quinn painting. Courtesy of Maryam Eisler

The idea is to give Brazilian Modernism a new context and a new audience and so far it's working. At De Santi's home, one senses the true essence of each design piece. "As there is so much wood in Brazilian design one of my pet peeves is wood furniture on wood flooring – that's a big no and it was not going to happen here," he laughs. Clearly, it's not.

“When I walked into the home originally the floors were all this greyish stained wood. They immediately had to go.” After quite a redesign, De Santi began placing his revered design objects throughout the home. “There’s an Oscar Niemeyer prototype of early Rio chaises in the bedroom, I have the Zalszupin cube chairs in wood in the living room, and I have beautiful Joaquim Tenreiro in the library,” he says.



A view from the staircase showing the foyer where there are two works by Larry Bell. A work by Anselm Kiefer is hung above a Sérgio Rodrigues ‘Grasselli’ shelf from the sixties where there is a pair of Louise Bourgeois ‘Eye’ sculptures, a work by Paloma Bosquê and an Egyptian fragment from 1st century BC. Courtesy of Maryam Eisler

“These are amazing treasures that can’t be found again and I am so lucky because of the nature of what I do to acquire and incorporate them within my home.” Design objects, he states, are utilitarian – they are meant to be used. “I love to share the collection with people via dinner parties and intimate meals,” he beams.



Ulysses De Santi. Courtesy of Maryam Eisler

“I love being surrounded by these beautiful objects that I love and collect. But what are they for, if not to be appreciated and shared also with others?” So many of De Santi’s friends have discovered Brazilian art and design by coming to his home and that’s deeply satisfying to him. He’s sharing not only what he’s passionate about but also a piece of his culture and heritage.