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MICHAEL SMITH'S
NEW HOME IN MADRID

SPOTLIGHT ON
AFRICAN ART

ARTIST VIK MUNIZ
IN PARIS

35
ARTISTS
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FALL 2017
ISSUE N° 6



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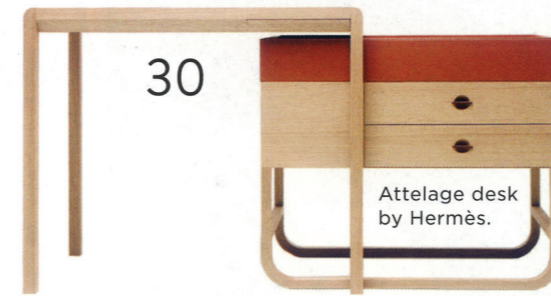
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The entrance hall in the Madrid pied-à-terre of designer Michael S. Smith and Ambassador James Costos. Photography by Ricardo Laboughe; styled by Carolina Irving.



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A FRESH TAKE

An elegant apartment
in a Madrid palazzo inspires designer
Michael S. Smith and Ambassador James Costos
to see their collection of art and
objets in a brand-new light

TEXT BY ANDREW FERREN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICARDO LABOUGLE
STYLED BY CAROLINA IRVING

Gilded touches in the entrance hall evoke the original decor of this former Madrid palace; the sconces are from Circa Lighting, the antique mirror is English, and the faux-porphry urns are late 19th century. For details see Sources.



An antique Coromandel lacquer screen provides a dramatic backdrop for the living room furnishings, which include a sofa upholstered in a Templeton cotton and O. Henry House club chairs. **Opposite:** Michael S. Smith (left) and Ambassador James Costos in Madrid.

The living room features O. Henry House sofas, with pillows in a Jasper linen blend, and Jasper side tables in a faux-bois finish; the mirror is in the style of Louis XIV, and the artworks are by Andy Warhol.



During nearly four years of service as President Obama's ambassador to Spain and Andorra, James Costos and his partner, interior designer Michael S. Smith, were known for always achieving the perfect blend of Spanish and American culture—business and art, nobility and celebrity, diplomacy and diversion—in virtually every event on their packed agendas. Meanwhile, Smith used his own creativity, collections, and contacts to transform the ambassador's official residence in Madrid into a showplace for the best of American, Hispanic, and Spanish art, design, gastronomy, and enterprise. As America's highest-ranking hosts in Spain, the couple introduced Spanish wines to American businessmen and film stars while serving savory baked Virginia ham to Spanish grandees weaned on *jamón ibérico*.

With the change of administration last January, Costos and Smith exited the diplomatic stage and flew to their home in Southern California, delighted with the prospect of introducing their new dog, Greco, whom they rescued from a shelter in Madrid, to his furry siblings in Los Angeles.

But they never said good-bye to Madrid, instead relocating their possessions to a gracious 5,000-square-foot apartment on the *piano nobile* of a 19th-century former palace in the city's elegant Barrio Salamanca.

"We truly feel part of Madrid, and while we can't be here quite as often as we'd like, we really wanted to keep connected to our friends," says Smith, whose design projects in Spain and Europe have him frequently touching down in Madrid, while Ambassador Costos is busy consulting for a variety of Spanish and American companies. "This place is a tribute to our desire to always have a home to come back to."

Smith was drawn to the elegant proportions and beautiful ceiling details befitting what would traditionally have been the grandest suite of rooms in a European nobleman's house. He describes the process of completing the home—a rental that he has decorated but not altered—as a veritable "reshuffle" of much of the couple's art, antique furniture, and objets, which had been deployed so effectively at the ambassadorial residence. He found it both fun and illuminating that pedigreed pieces he'd grown accustomed to seeing in a certain way suddenly had new life in a fresh and far more relaxed context.

An impressively tall 18th-century Coromandel screen that appeared in the background of many official embassy photos—not to mention countless party pictures posted on Instagram—seems even more luxurious anchoring a quiet corner of their new living room. And the antique Chinese



painted panels that hang in the dining room came from the guest suite where the Obamas stayed in the ambassador's residence. "To get different effects with our 'recycled' furnishings, I've used simple white cotton slipcovers in a variety of shades and patterns," Smith explains.

"Michael's work in the apartment is perfection," Costos raves. "I think he hit all the right notes. It has modern formality, yet it's bright and comfortable."

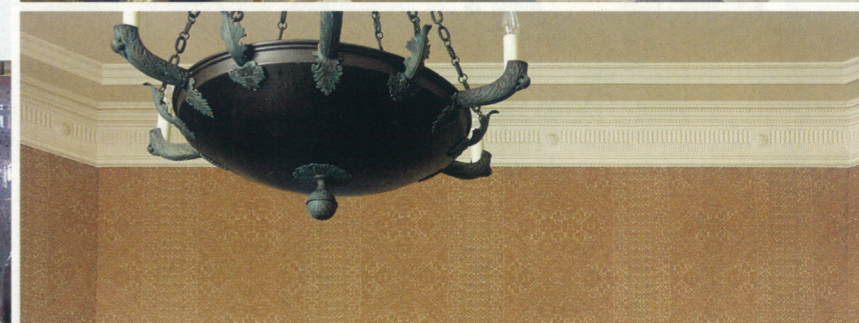
Like most traditional Spanish homes, the apartment faces both the street—in this case one of the neighborhood's prime thoroughfares—and a verdant courtyard in the back, which, as their luck would have it, features a large swimming pool and provides at least a visual link to Los Angeles. Off the large foyer, with its checkerboard stone floor, are the living room, the dining room, and a library that serves as Costos's office. The master bedroom and guest quarters overlook the tranquil garden.

They came with all the furniture they needed, but they are still buying art for the home, Smith notes. "And the mix is getting more and more Spanish." Currently installed are works ranging from 19th-century disciples of Goya to a bold composition by Luis Feito, an *éminence grise* of Spanish abstraction. A Chuck Close portrait of President Obama hangs near the entrance hall, and a newly acquired and sumptuously embroidered banner emblazoned with the crest of an old Spanish family floats over the headboard in the master bedroom.

The pair are enjoying Madrid more than ever, on their own terms. "Our life here is even more interesting and engaging now," Smith says, adding that "as private citizens we're no longer limited to going only where the official schedule would allow. Now we walk the streets, ducking into cafés and galleries at will. We get to experience the city on a much more intimate and immediate level." □



In the library, an O. Henry House sofa, club chair, and pillows are upholstered in Jasper fabrics, the table is a vintage Ron Seff design, and the wall covering is original; the portrait of King Charles IV is by Agustín Esteve y de María Marqués. **Right, from top:** A chinoiserie lacquer secretary by Burton-Ching and a Patricia Treib painting in a hall. The library's bronze chandelier is by Jasper.





An antique chandelier hangs above a Louis XVI mahogany dining table and chairs, which are slipcovered in a striped cotton, and the walls are clad in a cotton blend; both fabrics are by Templeton. The painted wallpaper panels are 18th-century Chinese.



A floral linen by Jasper envelops a guest bedroom, which is decorated with a Louis XVI settee slipcovered in a Templeton cotton, a set of trompe l'oeil bas-reliefs by Nicolas-Louis-François Gosse, and an antique chandelier. **Opposite:** A painting by Bryan Organ hangs above the bed; the table lamp is by Vaughan, with an Irving & Morrison shade.



The master bedroom wall upholstery and curtains are of a Madeleine Castaing fabric; the parchment cocktail table is by Bardeaux Meuble, and the painting by Jason Martin was purchased at auction.

“EVERY DECORATOR WHO LOVES HISTORY LOVES MADELEINE CASTAING’S PATTERN AND COLOR COMBINATIONS,” SAYS MICHAEL SMITH



1. “I’ve always been drawn to **Madeleine Castaing’s patterns**, and the one in our bedroom, **Coppelia Bleu**, is one of my favorites. The ceilings are quite tall, and you really can’t imagine the impact of how grand the fabric makes the space feel.” Smith purchased his yardage in Europe, but a selection of Castaing fabrics are available in the U.S. from **Brunschwig & Fils**. brunschwig.com

2. “Framed wallpaper is a good trick for adding character to a space. Companies such as **Ikse** produce wonderful reproductions, and with digital

technology you can create your own if the quality of the source material is good. But in the end, the framing is what’s key.” iksel.com

3. “Small, regional auction houses are an excellent, often overlooked, source. It’s like a treasure hunt. I love finding Spanish antiques in America and repatriating them, and vice versa. The noble banner in the master bedroom is from **Brunk** in North Carolina.” brunkauctions.com

4. Smith gave new life to his existing furniture with slipcovers. “The secret is we

did everything in all-white, but in four different shades, which makes it more complex. There’s a visual subtlety that reveals itself slowly.” Another tip: “I always prewash the fabric so that it’s preshrunk.”

5. A collection of mementos celebrates the couple’s time at the embassy in Madrid: the flag that flew over the embassy when James Costos was ambassador, a framed photo that the King and Queen of Spain gave Smith as a birthday gift, the phone that had a direct line to the U.S., and a star paperweight with the embassy’s seal.

6. Smith likes to vary his table settings from house to house. “In New York and Madrid, it’s more traditional than in California,” he explains. “On the West Coast, I’ll place giant mineral pieces on the table, and straw mats instead of table linens. If I’m entertaining formally in Spain, I set the table with **Alberto Pinto china**, **Georgian silver**, and **Astier de Villatte** glassware. It’s hard to find interesting patterned table linens. I tend to find the best from **Matouk** and **D. Porthault**, and **Zara Home** is cool and ever-changing.”

7. “You need to bring light in at multiple levels, not just overhead. I’ve learned from smart lighting designers that when you see a pool of light, your eye thinks that all the light in the space is actually that bright. Sconces, for example, give a sense of brightness without blowing out the area like a 7-Eleven.” The Winslow sconce in antique brass is from the Michael S. Smith Collection for **Visual Comfort**. circalighting.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ALEX MUCCILLI (4); RICARDO LABOUGLE (2); COURTESY OF VISUAL COMFORT & CO.; RICARDO LABOUGLE (3)

Items pictured but not mentioned are from private collections. (T) means item is available only to the trade.

Page 91: 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Page 96: 2017 the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc./ARS, New York. Page 105: 2017 ARS, New York/DACS, London. Page 112: 2017 Richard Serra/ARS, New York. Page 113: Anish Kapoor. All Rights Reserved, DACS, London/ARS, NY 2017. Page 113: 2017 the LeWitt Estate/ARS, New York. Page 120: 2017 ARS, New York/DACS, London. Page 139: 2017 ARS, New York/ADAGP, Paris. Page 154: 2017 the LeWitt Estate/ARS, New York. Page 155: 2017 the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc./ARS, New York. Page 156: 2017 the LeWitt Estate/ARS, New York. Page 160: 2017 the Milton Avery Trust/ARS, New York. Page 162: 2017 the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc./ARS, New York.

A FRESH TAKE

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