

EXHIBITIONS



Another Man's Treasure

In 1872 Sir Richard Wallace loaned some two thousand objects—nearly half of his monumental and manifold collection—to East London's Bethnal Green Museum for its inaugural exhibition. 2.3 million visitors queued for a look at the treasures amassed by one of Britain's most celebrated collectors; the overwhelming response approached transcendental awe.

This is the effect British interior decorator and antiques dealer Daniel Slowik will aim to channel within the confines of some ninety square feet for this year's WOW!house, the design showcase at London's Design Centre Chelsea Harbour, which will open its fourth iteration in June. Slowik's involvement is in collaboration with the Treasure House Fair, the art and antiques exhibition that grew out of the celebrated Masterpiece fair and continues its legacy of aesthetic excellence at the Royal Chelsea Hospital each summer. Given free rein to shop the fair's world-class dealers, Slowik enjoyed something of a taste of Wallace's curatorial opportunity.

The presumed-though-illegitimate son of the 4th Marquess of Hertford, Wallace inherited his father's extensive art collection and subsequently rounded it out with a dizzyingly diverse assortment of art and artifacts ranging from Renaissance armor to eighteenth-century portraiture, Sèvres porcelain, Chinese ceremonial objects, and African masks. Donated to the British public

on his death and housed in Hertford House, it's now the Wallace Collection, one of London's most beloved displays of prolific collecting.

"Part of the appeal of the Wallace Collection to me is that Richard Wallace had an interest in the general public seeing his work," Slowik says of his curatorial inspiration. "There was this idea that these extraordinary things shouldn't be exclusive." Translated to a modern-day milieu, these extraordinary things will come in the form of art, furniture, and *objets* from some of today's most venerable dealers. A visit to Ronald Phillips's Regent Street shop turned up an Etruscan style George III bookcase with an intricately carved pediment depicting vases, garlands, and ram's heads; a Regency Pontypool tray with exquisite chinoiserie scenes rendered in gold leaf has been secured from Butchoff Antiques; Philip Mould will loan an eighteenth-century portrait by Maria Verelst; treasures from Thomas Coulborn & Sons include a Chinese export pagoda in gilt black lacquer of about 1790 and a pair of Regency bronze and ormolu cassettes shaped like oil lamps. Visitors can also expect pieces from Adrian Sassoon, Godson & Coles, and more.

Slowik will present these treasures against the backdrop of a quintessentially British country house interior. "What I really enjoyed when I visited Wallace's collection when I was young was seeing this



Interiors by Daniel Slowik showing his English country house aesthetic. Photographs courtesy of Daniel Slowik.

Slowik's mood board for the Treasure House Fair vignette, featuring fabric swatches and art postcards from the Wallace Collection.

incredible furniture and art and porcelain, but in real rooms that people lived in."

At WOW!house, this (imagined) real room will also feature the latest designs for Nuthall Temple (named for the circa 1750 neo-Palladian Nottinghamshire home of Slowik's grandfather), the textile collection Slowik launched last year with his partner, Benedict Foley. The line, much like Slowik's interiors, puts a bit of a contemporary twist on traditional motifs: "I do favor a traditional look," Slowik admits, "but the patterns also nod to David Hicks, who was the master in mixing dynamic, modern style with the traditional." As Slowik sees it, it's an enticing juxtaposition to the museum-quality antiques afforded by Treasure House's dealers. "We are showing things that are exceptional in a very accessible way—and that was really the basis of Wallace's collection, too."

The practice of bringing the exceptional down to earth is rooted in Slowik's—and, it's fair to assume, Wallace's—belief that exposure to and appreciation of beauty is nothing short of divine. "Being surrounded by beauty is really transformational," muses the designer, who submits that beginning his own career as an assistant in the antiques department for Colefax & Fowler, where he was based in the storied Yellow Room at 39 Brook Street, left an indelible mark on his own aesthetic sensibility.

It's an unspoken affect, he reckons, that perseveres throughout history. "Hundreds of years ago, people went into a cathedral and worshiped but they also enjoyed access to something incredible. They were there for aesthetic enrichment." In today's hyper-visual world of at-your-fingertips inspiration, Slowik's installation bets on the fact that fresh exposure to the world's most beautiful things can still surprise and delight. —Hadley Keller

***A Room for a Collector* • WOW!house, Design Centre Chelsea Harbour, London • June 3 to July 3 • dcch.co.uk**

