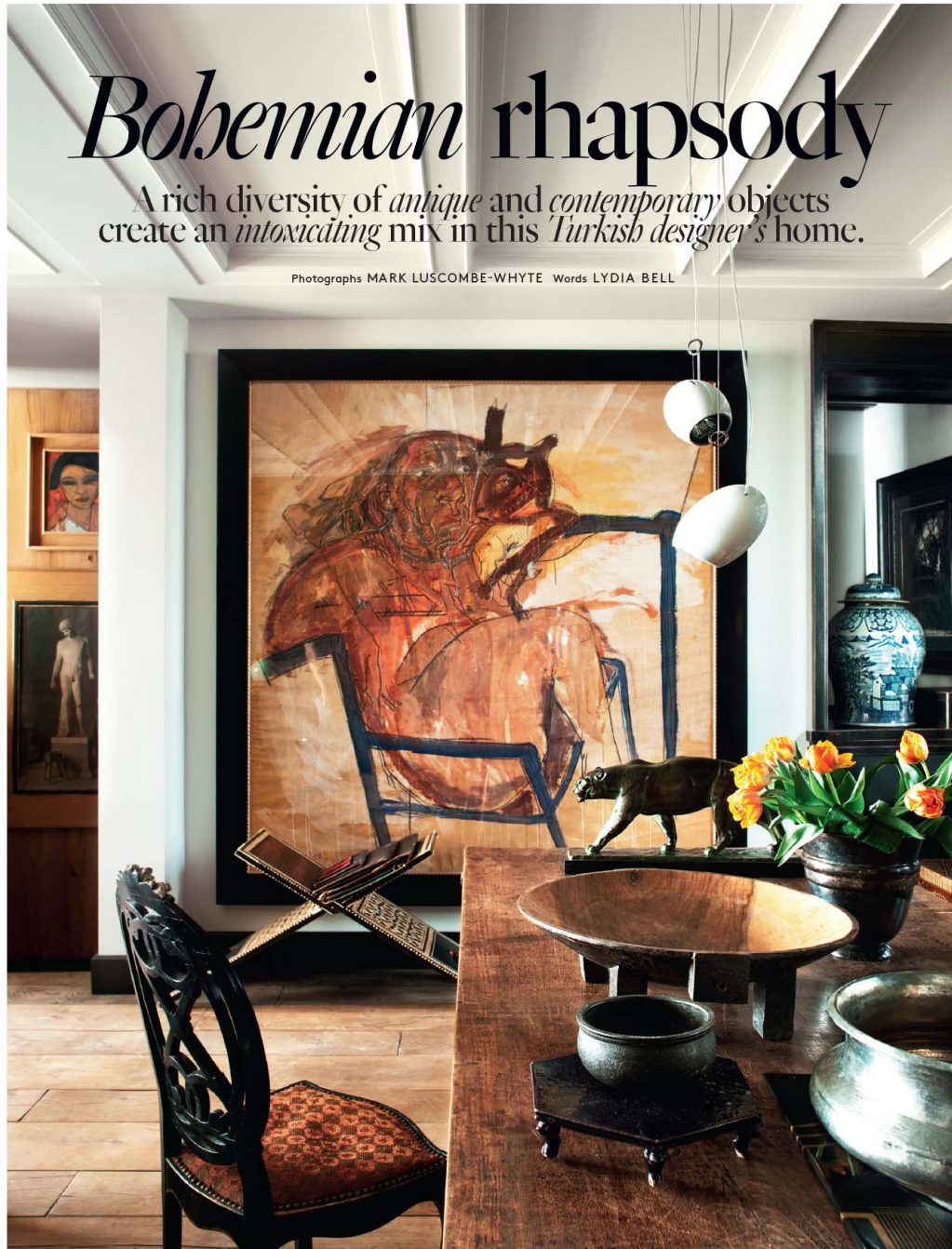


Bohemian rhapsody

A rich diversity of antique and contemporary objects create an intoxicating mix in this Turkish designer's home.

Photographs MARK LUSCOMBE-WHYTE Words LYDIA BELL



This page The round sliding door accesses the guest bedroom. An Egyptian art deco wall panel is highlighted by black lacquer and bronze wall lights. Opposite page A large painting by Mehmet Gülerüz dominates the living room. A mother-of-pearl and wooden reading table from the Ottoman period sits below. The dining table is 18th century Spanish and holds bronze and copper Turkish bowls. The tiger statue is art deco.

The fast-gentrifying Istanbul neighbourhood of Galata is a historic, cultural area that still echoes with vestiges of the pre-Ottoman and Constantinople period, such as the Galata Tower, which is a legacy of the Genoese from 1348. Popular with creatives and fashion designers, and lined with hipster restaurants and bars, Galata exudes colour, warmth, and dynamism. Space is at a premium in this dense, multi-layered district, and it is here that Turkey's foremost interior designer Hakan Ezer has an apartment in which he has harnessed all the contrasts and eclecticism of the area.

Hakan chose the apartment for the beauty of the streetscape outside but also for its exceptional view of the Golden Horn at Sultanahmet, the Old City. It was tricky bringing character into the apartment, which had previously undergone a bland refurbishment of its 1920s facade. However, Hakan says, "Every morning, to wake up overlooking the Bosphorus, with the view of the Topkapı Palace, the silhouette of the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia is a priceless experience."

Hakan first rearranged the layout of the apartment, putting the living areas upstairs and the bedrooms on the entrance level. The apartment occupies the top two floors of the building, and the lift accessed both floors. To maximise space, Hakan removed the second-floor lift access, creating a larger living area, which allowed him to add a fireplace. The slim windows were replaced with wide picture-book windows to optimise the Bosphorus views. He moved the bedrooms around as well, to create a sense of openness, light and connection between the spaces.



This page On the living room table is a bronze statue, *The Shake Charmer*, by French artist Charles Arthur Bourgeois, alongside an Ottoman incense burner and a 19th-century shell-shaped porcelain dish. Opposite page, clockwise from top left In the entrance hall there is a 19th-century Anglo-Indian armchair and a table made from a 19th-century Chinese tray. Four handpainted panels taken from a Chinese screen adorn the walls. A Verner Pantan chandelier hangs over the stairs. The portrait is by V. Blason, and the painting to the left is by Senol Yorozlu. An art deco figure and 18th-century Chinese porcelain occupy a niche on the staircase. The kitchen is in painted wood and the tabletop is Carrara marble set with celadon plates and 1950s glasses.



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should have a story, *those with mystery always fascinate me.*”



The rich culture of Istanbul informed all Hakan's design choices for the apartment. “Orientalism is always in my heart,” he says. Eclecticism must be in his heart as well, as his celebrated projects often blend contemporary objects and art with antique pieces. His inspiration for this apartment – as with many of his projects – came from the notion of a journey along the fabled Silk Road, taking influences from China, Iran and Turkey in the 17th and 18th centuries. So, Chinese pottery is mixed with Indian textiles, Ottoman artefacts with Persian rugs. This is carried through from room to room, creating a sense of symbiosis amid the diversity.

Massive oak wood panelling and an untreated timber staircase bring texture and warmth, and mirrors are used extensively to enlarge small spaces. Embedded in the facade of the massive oak doors are fragments of Chinese hand-painted textiles that Hakan salvaged from an old Chinese screen door. He created and commissioned his own patterns and designs for many of the soft furnishings and ceramics, introducing a bespoke quality.

When it came to the objects, sculptures and artworks, everything was subjected to what he calls a ‘harmonised combination’. He avoids pieces that are too dominating, make too grandiose a statement, or compete with others. “For me, objects are not just items for display, but are a part of my life,” he says. “Objects should have a story and those with mystery have always fascinated me. I’ve been collecting over many years and each piece reflects various moods and different episodes of my life. They are a connection with my past.” 15

For more go to hakanezer.com.

These pages in the living room, which overlooks the Topkapı Palace and the Blue Mosque, a painting by Canan Tolon hangs above a sofa, custom made by Hakan Ezer. The statue is *Two Sisters* by Kai Nielsen. The coffee table is from Afghanistan and the chandelier is early 20th-century Belgian. The leather armchairs are by Turkish architect Vedat Tek.



SPEED READ

» One of Turkey's foremost interior designers Hakan Ezer has an apartment in the historical yet hip Galata district of Istanbul. » Set over two floors, the home is oriented towards the mesmerising views of the Bosphorus. » Timber panelling provides a warm backdrop to the owner's contemporary and antique furnishings, while mirrors help to enlarge the space. » An eclectic array of objects, collected over several years and reflecting different periods of Hakan's life, provide intriguing reference points.

This page in the master bedroom, simple oak-clad walls are hung with a portrait (above the bed) of Halil Pasha, an Ottoman art collector, and a self-portrait by Turkish artist Feyhaman Duran (left). Serge Mouille light. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: The bed in the guest bedroom was designed by Hakan Ezer. The bedside tables are from the 1940s. Ralph Lauren patchwork pillows. Large painting above the bed is by Canan Tolon. On another wall of the guest bedroom is a portrait by Albert Milla. Chandelier is bronze. The arabesque stools belonged to Ahmet Tevfik Pasha, the last Ottoman grand vizier. In the master bedroom, a work by Eral Akyavas hangs above an original Hans J. Wegner chair.