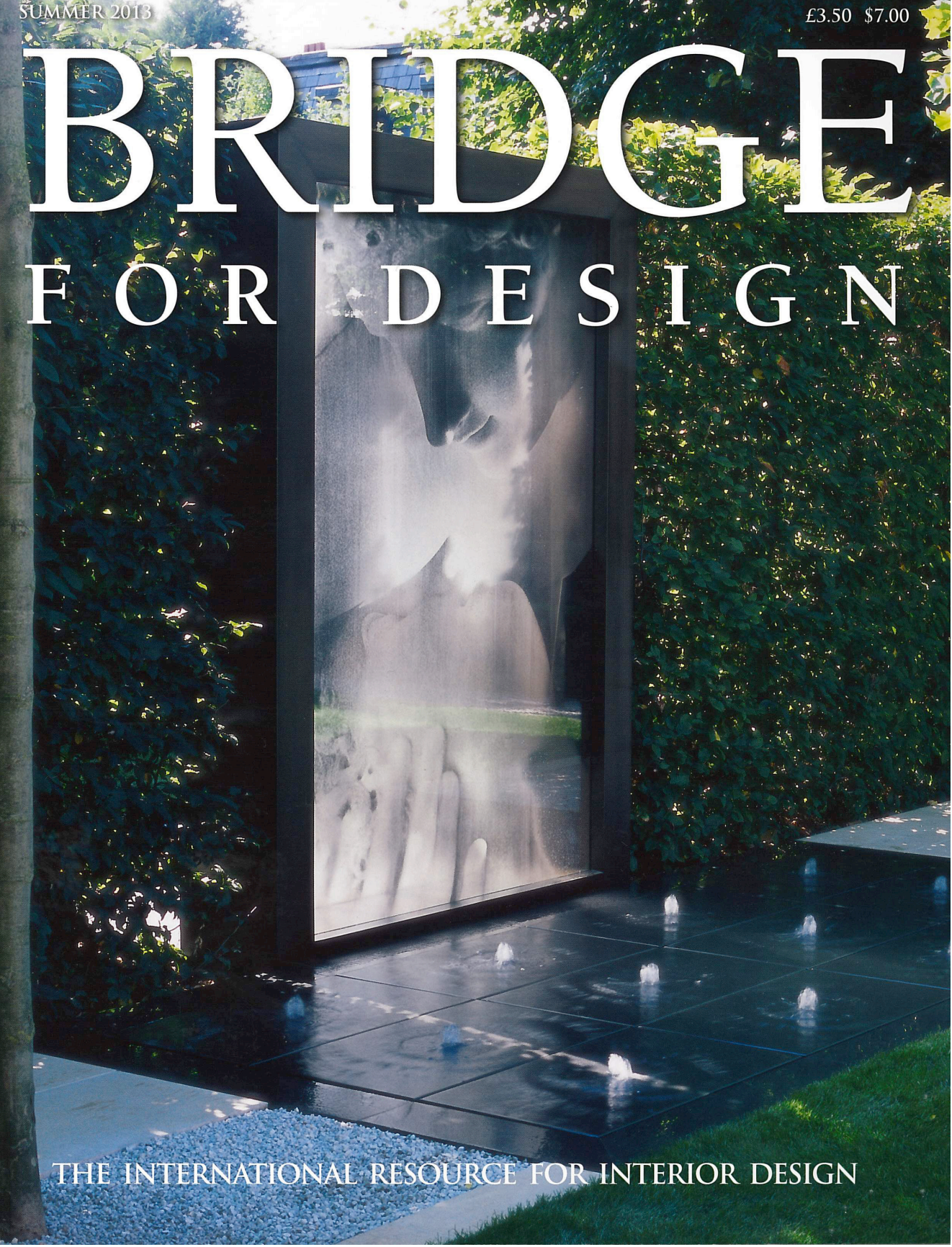


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TIPS ON HOW TO START COLLECTING FURNITURE

BY MICHAEL BRUNO

- 1) My first tip to anyone wanting to start collecting furniture and design objects is to buy what you love. Not only will you be acquiring pieces to enjoy for a lifetime, they will also become heirlooms for future generations. All markets are cyclical but antiques retain their value well.
- 2) Research as much as you can to know what you are buying. Read contemporary books published by industry experts, consult period documents which you can often find online or in libraries, visit museums and antique fairs and speak to dealers – they are often a fountain of knowledge.
- 3) Provenance, history and heritage can make a difference in price and authenticity. Where it was made and who owned it. There should usually be documentation to back up claims – letters from families or photographs. Don't just take someone's word for it if they say Jane Austen once owned the piece! However, while provenance is an added bonus, there are still lots of great antiques to be had where there's no provenance. A missing signature doesn't make it any less important or valuable. I say better an excellent anonymous piece than a mediocre signed one.

- 4) I believe in always buying antiques in the best original condition. I tend to avoid over-restored pieces, as some are so restored that there is nothing original left. If it is something I really love then I will consider getting it restored myself to my own specifications to ensure that I know exactly where the value is or isn't being added.
- 5) Avoid trends. You are most likely to end up paying too much. Trends sometime mean the market has not yet been established and items become a passing fashion. It is much better to buy what you like, especially if the item is not fashionable and will therefore have a lower price point.
- 6) Play around with different pieces and add to what you love. Don't be stuck with one style or period. The top interior designers are mixing traditional antiques with contemporary design to create a new look that works for today's modern interiors.
- 7) Think about buying from a young designer or artist. Often the most interesting and collectable pieces are made at an early stage in their career.
- 8) Buy from places that you trust. There are so many places where you can pick up antiques today – online, shops, auction houses, shows, fairs and markets. Try to find a dealer who is respected and has been trading for some time – they will have established a good reputation and will be able to help you build your collection.



- 9) Avoid buying fakes by working with reputable dealers. These are the only people that I buy from because I know their inventory has been vetted by experts. I prefer dealers who are eager to educate me and offer more information than I have requested. Also, do your research so that you have an idea of what something roughly costs. Be wary if the price is too good to be true – it probably is.
- 10) Lastly, buy the best you can afford and dare to be different! It is better to have one or two good strong pieces for a lot of money than a lot of mediocre ones for less. A lot of mediocre never adds up to more than just mediocre.



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