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A colorful LIFE

PAINTER **HUNT SLONEM** HAS A FEARLESS WAY WITH COLOR AND A PASSION FOR ANTIQUES. IT'S ALL ON EXTRAVAGANT DISPLAY, AS HE SHARES IN HIS NEW BOOK, *WHEN ART MEETS DESIGN*.

TEXT *Emily Evans Erdmans*



Hunt Slonem's *Cockatoo Whisper*, 2014, and other parrot paintings inspired a fabric in his new collection for Groundworks. **OPPOSITE:** Slonem worked with Ellen Kennon, a color specialist and the owner of Full Spectrum Paints, on choosing the wall colors in his four homes. They chose Full Spectrum's Del Sol for the Oriental Room on the second floor of Cordts Mansion, his house in upstate New York, because "it inspires divine awareness and spiritual awakening," Kennon says. Chaise longue upholstered in Lee Jofa's York velvet.

PHOTOGRAPHER MARCO RICCA (OPPOSITE PAGE)

In pulling together the palette for this upstairs parlor at Cordts Mansion, Slonem started with Lee Jofa's Buckingham velvet, which he used on the high-back sofa. Full Spectrum Paints' Violet, a color Slonem finds "meditational," was chosen to complement the many purple furnishings in the room.

PHOTOGRAPHER MARCO RICCA

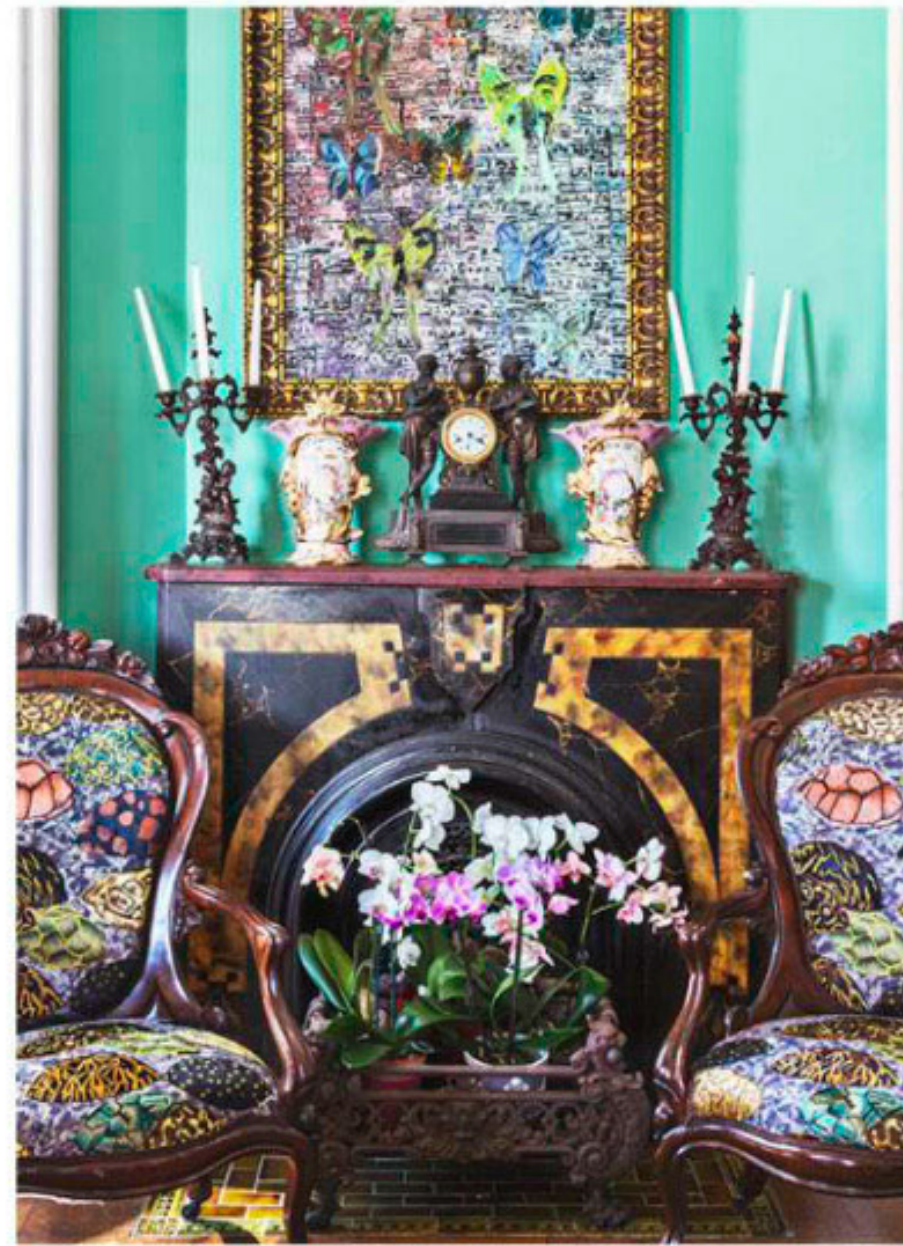
ENTERING HUNT SLONEM'S
UNIVERSE IS LIKE LANDING
IN OZ: ON ONE SIDE OF THE
DOOR LIES THE GRAY AND
QUOTIDIAN, ON THE OTHER,
DAZZLING TECHNICOLOR.

Over the past few decades, the artist has fashioned an alternate reality, a surreal cocktail of tropical jungle meets baroque grandeur, in the combined 75,000 square feet in which he lives and works. These spaces, ranging from a floor of a former parking garage in New York City to antebellum plantation houses in Louisiana, crystallize Slonem's artistic vision and are works of art in their own right.

A brilliant colorist, Slonem understands the emotional connection between color and mood. Curator Marilyn A. Zeitlin has written that in Slonem's paintings, "color and content seem inevitably fused." This equally applies to his roomscapes.

"How do you want a room to make you feel?" is how Ellen Kennon, a Louisiana-based paint specialist who has worked with Slonem to create colors for his historic Louisiana properties, approaches color. Instead of developing a scheme to coordinate elements in a room, Slonem takes this visceral approach to color and chooses those that resonate emotionally as well as suit the room's theme. He chooses mainly clear colors, described as "antidepressant" by Kennon.

The paint expert first pursued Slonem as a client by sending him her Magical Gems set, comprising colors such as amethyst, tourmaline, and malachite. Most people use these intense hues in small places, such as the inside of a closet or a bookshelf, Kennon says. But Slonem, by far her most intrepid client, has no qualms about using them in a 40-foot ballroom or parlor. The enormous scale of his spaces and the heavy over-layer of pictures and objects help carry off even the brightest colors, while their vibrancy works to contract the space and cozy it up. He chooses these same saturated colors as backgrounds for dis-



playing his work because he believes a white wall distracts the eye away from the piece.

The artist sets a loose parameter of historic appropriateness when choosing colors. "I always find an existing example of the use of that color within a hundred years of the house—not after, but earlier. They used great colors. Everyone

ABOVE: In a small room at Cordts Mansion, the walls are painted in Full Spectrum Paints' Aquamarine, a color Kennon describes as "relaxing yet refreshing." The antique chairs are upholstered in Star of India, part of his collection for Groundworks. **LEFT:** Slonem in his New York City studio. **OPPOSITE:** The walls in the Bachelor Room at Cordts Mansion are covered in Hutch by Hunt Slonem for Groundworks.

thinks these houses were white, but they weren't. First of all, so many had faux-finished doors, which were more expensive than wood ones. They also used to faux-finish the slate mantels every few years. I'm on a green kick right now. This friend of mine just bought a historical home in New Orleans, and she is now using a paint called Old World European Chartreuse. It's so delicious—it's like moss growing on the wall."

Indeed, the artist goes through color phases. A predisposition for pink marked the first decoration of Cordts Mansion, his country house in New York's Hudson River Valley, which was later superseded by lavender and blue.

A room might be painted three times before the color is deemed right. A houseguest, the magazine editor Marian McEvoy, once chastised Slonem for choosing a particularly Pepto-Bismol shade. A "peculiar" lavender-blue-gray copied from the trim of the Gallier House in New Orleans was used to paint a bedroom at Lakeside Plantation, but it didn't hold the space, nor did several attempts at aqua. Slonem isn't fazed by such setbacks. He lets the process unfold. This approach illustrates how the artist differs from a designer: His rooms evolve, rather than being planned and designed.

In Slonem's world, there is fluidity between creating and living; to create decoratively is to live decoratively. Supporting this symbiotic relationship is Slonem's passionate pursuit of collecting and decorating, or "collectorating" as he has dubbed it. He is energized by the act of creating settings with his collections, which in turn fuel his work. The vast amount of square footage he has managed to obtain affords him room to create even more settings. In a way, for Slonem, the point of having so much space is to fill it.

"I won't look at a house that's under 10,000 square feet," he says. "Why would I bother to go through all that for no space?"

Excerpted from When Art Meets Design, by Hunt Slonem, with an introduction by Emily Evans Eerdmans (Assouline).

PHOTOGRAPHERS THIS PAGE, TOP, AND OPPOSITE PAGE: MARCO RICCA; THIS PAGE, BOTTOM: MARCO TOUSIGNANT



A parlor off the dining room at Lakeside, one of two historic plantation houses Slonem owns in Louisiana, is painted in Full Spectrum Paints' Barry's Babylon, a festive color chosen for its "antidepressant" effect. The embroidered curtains are made from Lee Jofa's Diva silk. Colorful antique perfume bottles sparkle on the center table.



PHOTOGRAPHERS OPPOSITE PAGE: MARCO RICCA; THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARCO RICCA (3), MARC TOUSIGNANT



LEFT: Full Spectrum Paints' Albania Verdigris was chosen for a bedroom with southern exposures at Slonem's Albania Plantation in Louisiana. RIGHT: A chair at Cordts Mansion is covered in a Kravet Couture velvet.



LEFT: An assortment of Slonem's iconic bunny paintings. RIGHT: Full Spectrum Paints' Giverny Green in the guest bathroom of Slonem's New York City studio was inspired by the color of the shutters at Monet's retreat.

