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For this year's Sotheby's Designer Showhouse and Auction, twelve established and up-and-coming designers are curating signature rooms with unique pieces from a range of Sotheby's departments, including 20th Century Design, Prints, Silver, Photography and English furniture. Here, Richard Rabel, who is creating the Showhouse Foyer I/Gallery, shares his design philosophy, tips for new collectors and more.

66 ome people think that foyers and galleries should provide the visitor with a dramatic experience – like walking Onto a Broadway set," says Rabel, who designed both spaces for Sotheby's Designer Showhouse. "I believe these spaces should have enough in them to let visitors know a bit about the people living there, but should not overwhelm with furnishing and tchotchkes." Rabel's studio was selected for New York Magazine's Best of New York Design in 2013, 2014 and 2015.



## Aside from personal touches, what else is important in decorating foyers and galleries?

A foyer is your first point of contact when entering a house and should feel airy - ditto with a residential gallery space. What's important are chic finishes on the walls, ceilings and floors, stylish lighting, a place to sit briefly and, in the case of the foyer, a place to keep your keys.

## Do you have a vision for the Showhouse foyer?

I had this crazy idea of a space that is monastically simple and yet embraces a modern vision of the Baroque – a place with a well-balanced mix of textures and materials set in a sombre setting.

Were there any pieces you discovered during this process that you especially fell in love with? The Warhol Mao print I use in the foyer is a showstopper. The William IV Rosewood Table used in the gallery is the type of antique that is almost dismissed these days, but it's a fine piece of early 19th-century English furniture. Those are just a few!



#### Why do you love working with antiques? What do they add to a space? I love working with antiques and vintage pieces because they infuse a certain soul and add gravitas to

spaces that few new items can.

#### What period are you most inspired by right now? I've been inspired with the grandness of the Baroque for many years and always try to figure out a way of

toning it down for today's tastes (and budgets). It's the genius of the textures and variety of materials that

### Which design websites do you browse for inspiration? My weekly perusal includes the blogs Quintessence, Nest by Tamara, Habitually Chic and La Dolce Vita. I

also spend time on the Architectural Digest and Elle Decor sites. But I'm equally inspired by my own travels, whether it's going to a untouristy spot in Hanoi or staying at a contemporary hotel with character like the Fasano in São Paulo.



Are there any designers whose work you admire?

In no particular order, I'm inspired by the work of Peter Marino, Jean-Louis Deniot, Steven Gambrel, David Collins, Bill Sofield, Thad Hayes and Axel Vervoordt.

# Which shops (for wallpaper, furniture, carpet, etc.) are your all-time favourites?

I'm particularly endeared to the innovative printed wood tiles from Mirth Studios. For wallcoverings, my first stop is always MDC. For fabrics and carpets, I'm partial to Kravet, Holland and Sherry, Lee Joffa and de Le Cuona. For furniture shopping, I always look at what Maison Gerard, Cocobolo and Stillfried Wien have to offer. Apparatus and Rich Brilliant Willing are always good sources for hip, unpretentious lighting. For assistance in putting it all together, my go-to contractor is Best and Company.