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photography by Simon Upton

influential styles

FROM BAROQUE TO BAUHAUS AND BEYOND - INSPIRATION FOR TODAY'S INTERIORS





ABOVE On a Victorian fireplace in London, a modern stoneware dummy by Althea Wilson adds an exotic touch.

BELOW Hubert Zander uses his collection of tribal artefacts, centred on the wonderful tribal hat, to make a visual statement in a very small hallway. This eclectic mix of tribal art, taxidermy and books gives a real "explorer" feel.

ARTEFACTS

The eye that takes pleasure in the exotic looks beyond convention to find beauty in unusual objects. Tribal art, hugely varied in form and style, embodies a different aesthetic to the art of the West, and many artefacts chosen to decorate an exotic room dazzle with their originality and inventiveness, bringing a sense of theatre and spectacle. The perfection of an ancient Greek statue would be out of place in an exotic interior; the beauty and vitality in a primitive, naïve carving of a wooden idol from Africa lies not in perfection but in an expression that celebrates the anomalies of the human form.

Fundamental to a space decorated in the spirit of the exotic are unusual materials and textures indigenous to a particular land. Wood, bronze, lacquer, pottery and porcelain, marble and stone, animal skins and fabrics woven from natural materials – cane, straw or bamboo, cotton, linen and silks – all will find a place in the exotic interior. Imagination plays an important role in making native artefacts decorative in the modern interior, as it figures in the way objects are combined and displayed.



The panoply of objects includes many created for specific uses. African tribal carvings in wood or antique ivory, as well as tribal masks, spears and shields, are artefacts intended for religious, warlike or ceremonial rituals. Collections of objects from a particular culture, be it India, China or Africa, whose function is embedded in tradition – Japanese dress accessories such as *inro* medicine cases or *netsuke* toggles, for example – add interest and flavour. Among the artefacts at home in an exotic interior are mountings for swords or armour, gaming pieces, food and writing boxes, ink paintings, burial vessels, lanterns and incense burners. The cross-cultural mix of remote source and fresh eye is key.