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PAST



MASTER

Interior designer Cameron Kimber is unhindered by self-conscious regard for any particular period. A compulsive collector, he has furnished his inner-Sydney apartment with an informed jumble of *objets* and styles gathered from the past.

Cameron Kimber (opposite), of Lesley Walford Interiors, favours a quixotic mix of colours and fabrics (this page). The large cushion is covered in Rubelli's rich 'Black Pepper'.



The Sydney flat of interior designer Cameron Kimber is strewn with enigmatic *objets d'art*. He is, by his own admission, "a boy from the past", but one, he says "with no cobwebs". It is an apt description for the 26-year-old compulsive collector and his tiny robin's nest high up in a Thirties apartment block on Macleay Street.

At first glance, his style is difficult to pin down. He has classical tastes and he seamlessly blends traditions. English grand? Decorator sophisticated? Thirties glamour? Whichever, his look goes further than decorating or making something out of nothing. With an assured eye he has put together an informed jumble of styles, periods, colours and textures – *famille rose* china with 1930s silver cigarette boxes, Tiffany-bought crystal, Japanese lacquer, Art Deco knick-knacks and tortoiseshell. His collection of 18th and 19th century furniture, real or repro,

is shaken up by the occasional odd touch – Italian tapestries, French toile, silk leopard skin, orthodox faded velvet and a frayed Aubusson rug.

"As long as it works visually," he laughs, "nothing else matters very much." With unflagging enthusiasm he can talk at length about the errors of matching. "Period rooms can be very boring, so I always put things in to break the spell."

Cameron confesses his standards are not frighteningly high. Fortunately, an object

for him does not have to be a showstopper of its kind to pass muster – the cracks and stresses of time are allowed to enhance the appeal. "I like things just for their beauty, no other particular reason." He is genuinely amused by the nonsensical aspect of his obsession. "Most of what I buy is useless," but, he counters, "so decorative." He says he goes for stuff that isn't particularly fashionable. For instance? "I love the classical style of Fifties decorating



– the floral linens and those faux bamboo chairs – I find it oddly reassuring."

Asked how he happened into decorating, Cameron says, "I can't remember a time I wasn't interested in interiors." In adolescence he pored over decorating books, art books, antique books. At 18, he joined the visual merchandising department of David Jones; at 20 he enrolled in the Randwick Technical College's much-touted Interior Design course. And when he graduated, it was to

Freedom Furniture he went for two years basic training. Then in June 1992, when Leslie Walford Interiors opened in Woollahra, he was recruited by the decorating maestro, to join the small, wizard team. It has, Cameron says, been "a fascinating learning curve".

Every interior decorator has his own way to make things not-quite-new. Cameron has clearly indulged his love of rough textures and pre-loved objects to

simulate the sort of patina that usually takes years of use. "I love patina," he declares, "but that doesn't mean I like the dusty, old maid look." Rule of thumb: "Don't use too much of anything," he explains. "I like American glitz, but only here and there so that you see it out of the corner of your eye. Usually one flashy object is all the flashiness a room needs."

The scope of his collection embraces the Directoire, Empire and most particularly, Regency periods. Everywhere the eye travels there is something pleasing and curious. Everything too in his flat works unselfconsciously to give a calm feeling of permanence. And so it

comes as something of a surprise to discover Cameron and his crack collections are all to be reinstated in a larger, grander flat he has purchased nearby. Luckily his feasts are movable: "My things seem to work equally well in totally different settings." That said, there will be some changes in his next living quarters. "Every single hard surface will be painted," he announces. Though without, he assures me, "a hint of sugariness". □

MELISSA WALKER-SMITH



From pretty monochrome toiles upholstering the gilt armchairs (opposite and above); to the ornate, dark chinoiserie elegance of his bedroom (top right); to delicate *famille rose* porcelain (centre left) Cameron's unique style is an enigmatic blend of best-loved periods, forms, patterns and prize pieces amassed with audacity and élan in his compact inner Sydney apartment (left).