

From Vision to Vignette | Skinner + Phillip Thomas, Inc.

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Skinner welcomes Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc. for a collaboration on the catalog for the October 13th European Furniture & Decorative Arts auction.

Phillip follows his guiding belief that the process of creating a home can and should be enjoyable for all involved. Since establishing his own firm in 2011, Thomas and his team have completed projects at many of the top buildings in New York City, and has worked with clients in Boston, MA, Newport, RI, and Southampton, NY as well as internationally.

When I visited Skinner to prepare vignettes for the upcoming auction, I think there were many from the Skinner team that were expecting to see a look of panic come across my face at the sight of so many items stacked high in the warehouse. My reaction, however, was quite the contrary. I was energized by all the possibilities and ready to tackle the collection of items. For the first two hours of my visit, I literally walked up and down the aisles of the warehouse familiarizing myself with the furniture and accessories. With every lap I took, new items would stand out to me.

I took the night to “marinate” and think about the options for creating the vignettes.

I returned to Skinner the next morning with a vision/theme that would guide the creation of my vignettes. While I feel very lucky to visualize things in my mind before they are even realized, I know that for many people this is not the case. To that end, I wanted to create vignettes that would demonstrate to the Skinner audience that the wonderful variety of pieces could be easily translated into varied interiors from the most traditional to the most contemporary. I took the vignettes that we created and, with the help of my team, then rendered them in varying materials that not only complemented but gave new life to these pieces.





For one of my vignettes, I was taken by a variety of colorful and fantastical clocks. These were the inspiration for the entire story. I decided to create a setting for these clocks displayed on a beautiful desk. Why have just one clock when you can have a collection of clocks of varying colors and materials that all excite the eye?

For another vignette, I was drawn to a Boulle-style black and brass cabinet. To me, it has a feminine appeal. I paired it with other pieces of varying color, materials and densities to create a vibrant moment that excites the eye.



In my interiors, it is key that a space excite the eye and keep the onlooker engaged. This is not necessarily achieved by bright colors, for example, as one would think. What really keeps my eye

engaged and interested is when an interior incorporates pieces from various eras that are made from varied materials with differing densities, reflectivities, etc. I like to feel that I create a “dynamic tension” in my interiors through my selections that engages the eye and keeps it thinking about and analyzing an interior. When a space is too safe, it loses its soul.

I carried this design philosophy of mine as I created these vignettes. I hope that this vision/theme for the auction and the resulting vignettes leave you inspired to go and create spaces with energy and joy.

– Phillip Alden Thomas