



multi-pronged iteration smothered with sea shells. “I have a history with chandeliers,” Louboutin sighs. “I bought this years ago—I found it in India but it’s a French piece—and kept it in storage until now. It took weeks to reassemble.”

RARE FINDS

An auction nut, Louboutin is never more excited than when truffling out antiques that others have overlooked. His best prize yet is the Jean-Charles Moreux marble table that sits in the library, which even he didn’t realise was an original and almost chopped in half so that Freitas could use it as a cuttings bench for his flowers. “Someone saw it outside in the rain and said, ‘This is one of the most important tables in the world! Are you out of your

corners, an effect that recalls the marks left by ivy when it’s prised away from an old wall. On we go to the tiled ballroom, empty save for a velvet-upholstered boudoir sofa, a couple of cabinets topped with curiosities—a tribal marriage token from Maprik, Papua New Guinea, an assortment of blue-and-white Chinese porcelain, a papier-mâché lizard—and two Indo-Portuguese chairs purchased in a Parisian flea market. “This is the party room,” Louboutin explains, recalling a celebration he hosted some months ago: a candlelit dinner for 80 guests in honour of the journalist Suzy Menkes. “It got so hot with all those candles, we had to throw open all the windows.”

Then there are the chandeliers. Louboutin has a close friend living and working in Murano, and it shows: curlicued glass and huge beaded exemplars quiver beneath intricately painted ceilings throughout the house. “When it came to the ceilings, I thought, well, we can’t hide them. So, we embraced them, adding colour [fondant pink, pistachio, ruby red] and gold leaf,” says Louboutin. “Once the ceilings were painted, I decided not to have French crystal chandeliers, but more colourful ones, so it felt super-pompous. I just thought, let’s go for it!” In the cinema room, its walls illustrated with scenes of India, hangs a

mind?” And then I realised he was right. It’s an original.” His bidding philosophy is simple: if you adore it, buy it. “You only regret what you don’t get,” he says. What did he buy at the last auction? “A staircase. I have no idea who it is by, but I know it’s incredible.”

His visual memory is razor-sharp. “It drives everybody crazy,” he laughs. “For instance, when I go to the factory in Italy, I say, ‘Hold on a second, there was a prototype I was working on two seasons ago that I set aside because it could have been better. Where is it now?’ They are like, ‘Oh, God. Out of 500 prototypes he’s talking about one he made a year and a half ago.’ But I absolutely remember things like that.” His aesthetic sensitivity affects the mood with which he constructs his interior schemes. Murano chandeliers, for instance, would “never, never, never” work in his Paris apartment. “I like coloured glass with the transparency of the light going through—it needs to be in sunlight. Paris is too grey.” Equally, heavy haute époque furniture in his Lisbon dining room—the only pieces he kept when he inherited the property—works within the stencilled walls of this traditional gallery, “but it’s not something I would consider anywhere else”.

His impulsive desire to acquire coupled with a professional eye explains

Clockwise from left: Louboutin found this French chandelier at a bazaar in India; the flower room, where Louboutin’s florist boyfriend Rui Freitas assembles arrangements



the eclectic mix of decades and styles throughout his home. In the library, a set of fluffy armchairs by Fritz Hansen sit alongside a Native American kachina doll and a 17th-century Peruvian Christ. In what Louboutin calls the Wedgwood Room, on account of its pale jasperware-blue ceiling, a Janine Janet bronze unicorn sits alongside a south Indian torso sculpture and an Indonesian crown. They are offset by a 1930s Mexican table and a pair of satin-backed tub armchairs from America. On the wall hangs a 16th-century portrait of Louis de Beauvau, a smug-looking military man with extraordinarily shapely legs.

The legs, it turns out, are the very thing that lured Louboutin in. “I think his legs are incredible—so elegant.” He pauses. “When I am doing shoes, I am always thinking first of legs. The idea of having nude on your shoe gives you better legs. He has white stockings and white shoes—I was fascinated by that.” The only thing that could improve it? A flash of red peeking out. “I owe a lot to red.” ■