

DESIGN & DECORATING



WINNER TUBES Part of architect David Rockwell's kaleidoscope collection.

F. MARTIN RAMM/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL; ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE ELOPHANT IN THE ROOM

A Call to Collect

Design pros on the objects they gathered obsessively as children and those they can't get enough of today

By CATHERINE ROMANO

NOT SURPRISINGLY, architects and designers tend to amass visual artifacts early. New York artist and landscape designer Paula Hayes made snowballs and tiny snowmen that she stored year round in a corner of her family's freezer "like a little town." Nunturat Robbamrung, now associate design director at Wilson Associates' New York studio, accumulated fruit seeds—fascinated by their shape—and organized them by size. Here, eight design pros on their youthful hoarding habits, and the collections they focus on today.



THEN ▲ "I collected little fur mice with very specific outfits," said **Lora Appleton**, founder of kinder Modern, a children's furniture gallery in New

York. "There was a king and queen, bride and groom, one in a yellow gingham dress... I still have them. I loved the diminutive quality, how all the detail in their attire and their faces was so real."

NOW "Vintage children's furniture is amazing," said Ms. Appleton. "I love the discovery, bringing it home, cherishing and then displaying."



THEN "At our beach house on Long Island, we put on bathing suits in the morning, wore them all day and emptied them of sand at night," said New York designer **Susan Petrie**. "At 5, I began saving the suits I wore year to year, and they became a collection."

NOW ▲ "I found a 1920s wool infant's bathing suit that fascinated me. Who would put an infant in a

wet wool suit?" said Ms. Petrie. "I mounted it in a shadow box and hung it. I still collect antique suits—the fabric, pattern, color, weight interest me—and use them in projects."

THEN "At around 9, I started collecting silver spoons from places I'd go on vacation. I loved the designs on the handles and bowl, with little icons and charms unique to each place," said **Allison Spanpanato**, SVP of Product Design at Pottery Barn Kids and PBteen.

NOW ▼ "A groom would give his bride-to-be a bracelet at engagement, and a matching one on their wedding day," said Ms. Spanpanato of the Victorian wedding bracelets she seeks out and wears every day. "I think of the woman who wore them and what her life was like."



THEN "My family would gift silver to me: my baby cup, filigree baskets, trays," said **MA Allen**, a designer in

Raleigh, N.C. "I would display them all on my bookshelves, as I've always been drawn to having odds and ends mixed together with books."



NOW ▲ "Italian brass bug ashtrays. I love brass objects and since they were once a functional object, it makes them interesting."

THEN "I collected stamps, the most curious of which were from countries like Nigeria that idolized American cultural icons—Graham Bell, JFK—by putting them on their stamps," said designer **Michael Suomi**, a principal with New York firm Stonehill Taylor. "I imagined I would be worshiped as a god if I ever visited those lands."

NOW "Antique door pulls that I install, Russell Wright midcentury American pottery that I eat off. Early 20th-century art I reframe."

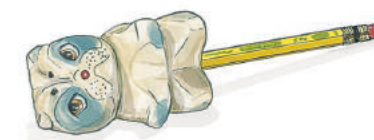
THEN "I loved to arrange my Muffy Bears and Madame Alexander dolls in creative ways," said New York designer **CeCe Barfield Thompson**. "One of my best arrangements was a talk-show seating tableau I created on top of my armoire. I was about 8 and obsessed with talk shows even though they weren't allowed. I watched Ricky Lake every day after school on a tiny TV in my armoire before my mom got home."

NOW "I've become enamored of

19th-century Lustre- and Transferware, beautiful vessels with interesting historical connections and narratives."

THEN "I always had a lot of building toys and blocks," said New York architect **David Rockwell**. "I even made Lincoln Log houses for my hamsters. Our family moved around quite a bit, and this allowed me to have control over creating something and to mediate the world."

NOW "Since my 30s, I've amassed a collection of more than 35 kaleidoscopes," said Mr. Rockwell. "They are objects of art in their own right but are meant to be used and enjoyed. The endless shifting patterns they form are a personal mini spectacle."



THEN ▲ "As a teenager, I became obsessed with these very odd little figurines they sold in Chinatown. The term of art is Chinese Baby-doll Pencil Sharpeners," said architect **M. Brian Tichenor**, of Tichenor & Thorp, in Los Angeles. "Some bemused child festively arrayed on a giant peach with a cheap pencil sharpener glued into a cavity below, or a cartoony domestic mammal looking surprised to be so co-joined."

NOW "My wife and I just keep building more buildings to house our out-of-print garden and architecture books, as well as stringed instruments. It's now six libraries, each focused around a general area of interest. This is probably a problem, but we are unrepentant."

Never a Dull Spindle

New takes on the four-poster bed invoke the romance of canopies but liven things up with chic carving techniques

IN A MODERN Manhattan apartment, Los Angeles designer Kerry Joyce was faced with a blank-slate bedroom sadly lacking in architectural charisma. He had introduced vintage pieces in other rooms, so Mr. Joyce decided to design a bed (right) that recalls the past without bowing to it. His cast-bronze, finely articulated four-poster bed rekindles the charm of wooden spindles and, said Mr. Joyce, "anchors the room with a little bit of heart."

After a decade or so of minimalist beds that forgo any draping but delineate volume with the barest of posts and rails, decorators are returning to the romance of the canopy bed without resorting to the festooning you'd encounter at a doily-dotted bed-and-breakfast. The reimagined four-posters replace overwrought Victorian spindles with unconventional, totem-like columns.

As the unnerving theory goes, canopied beds appeared in 13th-century Europe to keep rats from dropping upon the slumbering well-to-do, said Wolf Burchard, furniture research curator for London's National Trust. Americans in the sweltering South dispensed with the insulating canopies and draperies in the early 20th century, said Alexis Barr, instructor of design history at the New York School of Interior Design, to mini-

mize germiness. The canning of canopies also reflects the general "stripping down of the American interior."

Yet today's designers wistfully admire the four-posters' suggestion of cocooning. Under a client's soaring exposed-beam ceilings, Jessica Helgerson, who works in Portland, Ore., recently installed a bed by Los Angeles's Noir furniture (below left), with stanchions like upended polygraph-test lines. "It creates the feeling of a room within a room without closing things in," said Ms. Helgerson, who avoids canopied beds as too fussy and "decorator-y." Los Angeles-based Jeff Andrews, who stationed a similar bed in reality-TV star Kylie Jenner's former bedroom, finds approachable whimsy in these newfangled posts. Without a shrouding canopy, he said, they work with most décor styles and don't look "over-the-top or too commanding."

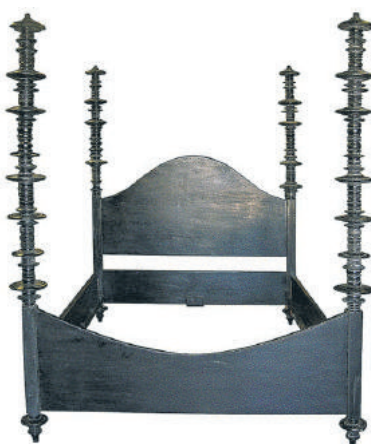
New woodcarving technology, namely computer numerical control (CNC) routers, make possible fanciful beds like London designer Geoff Hawkes's for Restoration Hardware (right), a svelte take on Baroque hardwood spindles. "It's trying to catch people's imagination," Mr. Hawkes said. "People walk in and go, 'That's interesting.'"

—Kathryn O'Shea-Evans



SPARE SPIRES Designer Kerry Joyce's bed adds soul to a Manhattan apartment featured in his coming book, 'The Intangible,' (Pointed Leaf Press).

JOSHUA NICHUGH (ROOM)



QS Ferret Bed by Noir, \$3,540 for queen, Mecox Gardens, 212-249-5301

18th C. Spindle Turned Bed, from \$3,395, RH.com

