



Interiors consultant Eddie Ross with the Moroccan rug that unexpectedly gave his bedroom a sickly tinge. JAITHAN KOCHAR

STYLE | DESIGN

What Was I Thinking? Interior Designers Confess Their Travel Souvenir Disasters

Foolish keepsakes that designers brought home—from an animal pelt to a vase so colorful it overpowers the flowers—and the lessons the tokens taught them

TRAVEL IS TRICKY for the acquisitive. Even design pros have been seduced by wares they realized were gaudy, impractical or mystifying once they got them home. Here, mementos that still haunt nine aesthetics experts, and insights gained.

Big Green Monster

Purchase: “A green wool rug I discovered in Morocco seemed like the missing piece for our master bedroom,” said Eddie Ross, an interior consultant and stylist based in Wayne, Penn. “At 12 feet by 14 feet, the size was spot on. But I’d just had the walls and ceiling in that room lacquered a creamy hue. When I put the carpet down, the space took on this heinous tint of overcooked egg yolks.”

Lesson: “Rugs need to aesthetically mesh with everything around [them], including the ceiling, so bring paint chips when you shop to avoid color mismatches. The rug wasn’t cheap so we had to live with it for a while until I ended up selling it.”



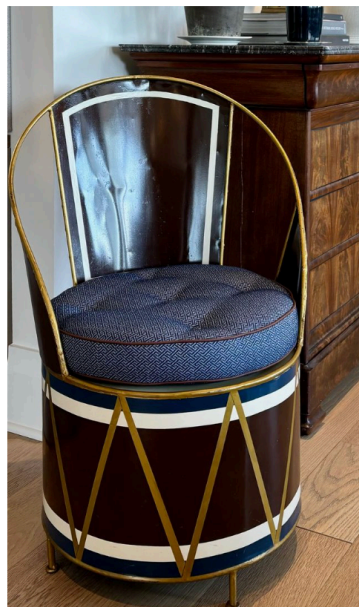
ILLUSTRATION: AGATA WIERZBICKA

bringing home a heat-sensitive souvenir.”

Mushy Sculpture

Purchase: “I was shopping with a client in Europe who procured a small but expensive wax sculpture of a reclining figure,” said Tracy Morris, an interior designer in McLean, Va. “We arranged to send the piece safely home, but the shipping company didn’t adjust for the record heat that year and the statue arrived melted. It’s still recognizable, but its level of repose is now much deeper.”

Lesson: “Think twice about



Somewhat Silly Seats

Purchase: “The tag on a pair of chairs in a London shop said they were from a 1950s Parisian night club. They are literally drums that are chairs,” said Tom Riker, a designer in Chicago. “We thought they were perfect for a playroom. We didn’t have one and bought them anyway.”

Lesson: “They were pricey for eccentric chairs that ended up in our office. If you can’t think [where] to plant furniture, wait, especially after lunch with wine!”

Clashing Mixer

Purchase: “As a fan of midcentury bar shakers, I thought this rustic version found in San Miguel de Allende could be a playful addition to my collection,” said Raili Clasen, a designer in Newport Beach, Calif., of a hammered copper shaker that evokes a frontier ghost-town. “It came off more cowboy than cocktail.”

Lesson: “If you’re a collector, curate like one. Think about it for a day and go back if you’re sure it’s a worthwhile addition.”



PHOTO: KIRSTEN FRANCIS

Flying-First-Class Carpet

Purchase: “Friends and I went rug shopping in Marrakesh, and I found a fantastic and colorful Beni Mirt,” Janine Carendi MacMurray, founder of New York’s AREA Interior Design, said of the rug shown here. “But shipping was an expensive mess and when it arrived many months later, I realized I wanted two to balance my living room.”

Lesson: “This time, I found an artisan on [Etsy](#) who made me a beautiful, similar rug and shipped it at no cost in a couple months. It’s better to work directly with a vendor instead of through a

touristy merchant middleman.”



ILLUSTRATION: AGATA WIERZBICKA

Bloom Bust

Purchase: “My husband and I bought a large Murano glass vase on our honeymoon,” said Annie Elliott, a designer in Washington, D.C. “It’s so colorful that it actually competes with any flowers we put in it, and it’s too garish to display on its own.”

Lesson: “No matter how meaningful the trip, resist the urge to impulse-buy a souvenir. Or buy the smallest possible version so you feel less guilty when you give it away.”



PHOTO: MANNY NAVARRO

Unwelcome Mat

Purchase: “On a whim, I bought a mountain-lion pelt in Crested Butte, Colo., where I was hiking. It was a major tripping hazard, but more pointedly, it didn’t fit the vibe of our home or my personality,” said Manuel Navarro, design director at the Austin, Texas, office of IA Interior Architects. “Even our cat hissed at it every time she walked by it.”

Lesson: “Imagine the reactions from others who share your home before making a purchase of something dramatic or unusual.”

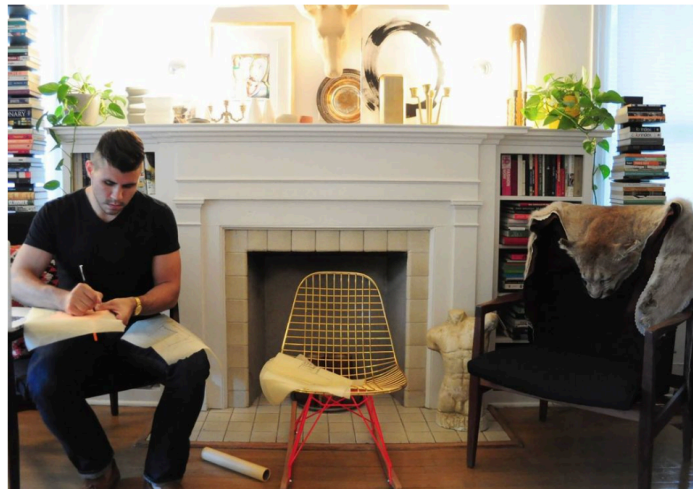


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Hook, Line and Sucker

Purchase: “On a trip to Toronto, I fell for this quirky oversize brass padlock shaped like a fish. I thought it could decoratively secure a bar cabinet or work as a paperweight. It’s still in the box,” said Lesley Myrick, an interior designer in Macon, Ga. “Worse, what I thought was a unique vintage piece turns out to be available all over the internet.”

Lesson: “Unless you have an immediate use for a kitschy souvenir, pass on it. And if it’s unclear if the piece is an antique, ask questions or do a quick online search to check.”



PHOTO: AMITY WORREL

Lost Bird

Purchase: “The shimmering roadrunner sand art I scooped up in Santa Fe, N.M., fits into that scene but comes off cartoonish, not chic, in my ranch-style home,” said designer Amity Worrel, in Austin, Texas, of the naively rendered, gritty portrait of a bird amid spindly weeds.

Lesson: “When you feel the need to hold on to a feeling, just take a photo. I put this on my vanity as a daily reminder to be intentional with my decisions.”