



A rusty Five Roses sign marks the entrance to Mark's apartment. LEFT The Indonesian tiles are from Amatuli and the old sink was a successful car-boot-sale purchase.

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mark valentine

Joburg's legendary artefacts trader has erected a cool new digs atop his burgeoning Jozi business

TEXT MILA CREWE-BROWN STYLING HEATHER BOTING PHOTOGRAPHS GRAEME WYLLIE

Mark Valentine's reputation as an intrepid traveller and merchant of genuine African and Asian relics supersedes him. He's been at it for more than 25 years and still travels every six weeks, personally sourcing the goods he sells. His man cave, as he dubs it, was built four floors above Amatuli as an occasional substitute to home.

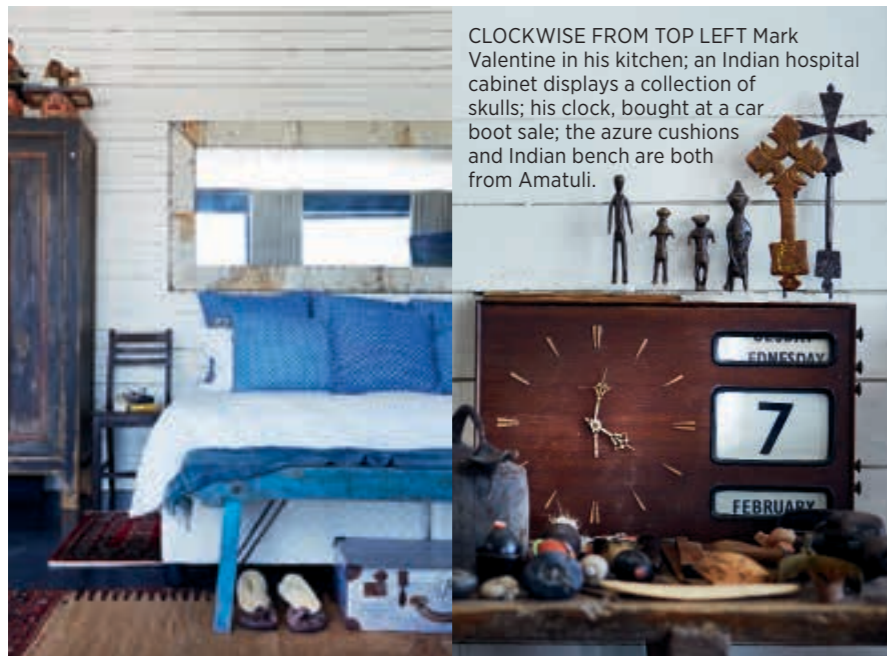
Picture Livingstone's modern day pied-à-terre and you'll have an idea. An armoury of found objects, carved figures and artefacts from markets, rural tribes and villages fills the bright space. 'I collect a lot of utilitarian things,' he says, referencing a melange of smoking pipes, wooden hair combs and Zulu headrests, all displayed with careful skill.

'Strange things interest me,' he explains, 'I'm not always looking for the most precious objects,' such as his divination bowl, originally used for throwing bones at ceremonies and now home to odds and ends. He recalls the origin of every piece but some – such as his Senufo daybed from the Ivory Coast, loaded into a container, hijacked by rebels at sea and negotiated back – have tales worthy of the camp fire. The handsome day bed now divides his open-plan bedroom and bathroom.

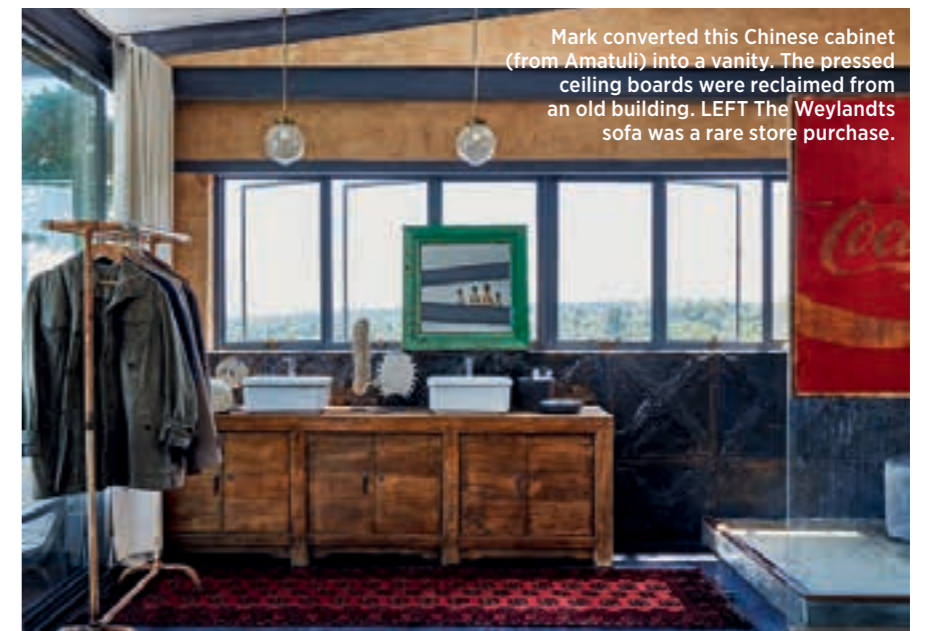
When he's not travelling he spends his weekends 'picking' at his favourite markets from Meyerton to Bloemfontein. 'I'm more a collector than a dealer,' he confesses, admitting to a warehouse tucked away with another 8 000-odd pieces that are waiting to be unveiled. amatuli.co.za



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Mark Valentine in his kitchen; an Indian hospital cabinet displays a collection of skulls; his clock, bought at a car boot sale; the azure cushions and Indian bench are both from Amatuli.



Mark converted this Chinese cabinet (from Amatuli) into a vanity. The pressed ceiling boards were reclaimed from an old building. LEFT The Weylandts sofa was a rare store purchase.