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SANDRA BALLENTINE

Sandra Ballentine is e-mailing to apologize: She forgot to show us the Ross Bleckner—it's under her bed. The 37-year-old *New York Times Magazine* style editor has been collecting for as long as she can remember and lives with her treasures in a one-bedroom Manhattan penthouse apartment.

Ballentine is running late for work the morning of her collection tour, and as she hurriedly tip-taps around her apartment in platform Manolo Blahniks, ticking off the names of her favorite artists, photographers and mid-century furniture designers, it is inevitable that she would miss a work or two—especially those stashed out of sight.

"There's more at my country house," she says with a sigh, surveying the stacks of crated pictures leaning against her bedroom wall next to the Saarinen night table, which she laments, is in need of repair. "I do give some pieces to friends for babysitting." Such good friends include interior designer Todd Black, who's literally watching one of her favorite L.C. Armstrong works—on his apartment wall.

Ballentine's stylish taste spans the century, from 1930's and '40's French furniture, to Mark Tansey, Jean Dubuffet and Lisa Yuskavage works on paper and contemporary works by artist-friends Armstrong, Richmond Burton and photographer Marcus Leatherdale. In her living room, two columns flank a white-leather Dunbar sofa, but only one column sports a perfectly formed chocolate-brown vessel.

"My housekeeper broke the other one—they were a pair by Madgelene Odundo—probably worth \$30,000. Now I dust that one myself," she says.

On the walls, paintings by James Sienna and Chantal Joffe and a painted panel by John Zinsser compete for space with Ballentine's photography collection: Gordon Parks, Helmut Newton, David Bailey, Lillian Bassman and a wonderful suite of vintage photographs by Madame Yevonde—a discovery from the time she lived in London.

Ballentine admits that her excellent eye can get her into trouble, which is why she now buys and consults for friends, even ghost-bidding at auctions. When it comes to her own collection these days, she says, "I'm trying to be more judicious with what I buy, because I'd also like to buy my apartment."

Gordon Parks, "Place de la Concorde," 1950, silver gelatin fiber-based paper.

L.C. Armstrong, "Soulstitch," 1998, bomb-fused acrylic and resin on linen on birch panel.

