

**THE FIX**

# How to Keep Your Collections From Looking Like Clutter

There's an art to arranging collections like a pro. Here are a few pointers.



At his house in Connecticut, Matthew Patrick Smyth combined objects with similar finishes. One table holds a black-painted model for a stage set; a dark, pitted bronze sculpture by Bruno Romeda; and stone, terra-cotta and bronze African artifacts. Simon Upton

At his country house in Salisbury, Conn., [Matthew Patrick Smyth](#), a New York-based designer, grouped some of his favorite things on tables, combining objects with similar finishes. In the home's principal bedroom, a table holds a black-painted model for a stage set; a dark, pitted bronze sculpture by Bruno Romeda; and stone, terra-cotta and bronze African artifacts.

“The colors and textures work together because there’s a matte quality to them all,” said Mr. Smyth, whose house will be featured in his upcoming book, “Through a Designer’s Eye,” next month.

Another rule of thumb for designers is that smaller collections often look best when displayed in odd numbers — “groups of three, five or seven,” Mr. **Smyth** said. So if you have four or six sculptural vases that look awkward together, try removing one to see if the overall composition improves.