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NEW YORK DESIGN CENTER

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ARRAY







By Cathy Whitlock

# MICHAEL BRUNO'S 2ND ACT

A PROFILE OF 1STDIBS® FOUNDER MICHAEL BRUNO AND HIS NEXT VENTURE, 1STDIBS@NYDC.

Sometimes all it takes is a lightbulb moment for a brilliant idea to be born. For Michael Bruno that moment came in 2001, when a visit to Clingancourt changed everything.

After working in real estate for a decade, Bruno moved from San Francisco to Paris in search of a career change. He followed his passion, searching the flea market stalls for treasures. Realizing a database for antiques did not exist as with real estate, the fledgling entrepreneur created a system of items available to view and purchase. The result was the launch of 1stdibs.com in 2001, a website that would introduce the Paris antiques market to buyers worldwide.

1. The entrance to Clingancourt's Paul Bert Market, the leading open-air showcase for 20th-century decorative arts. (Photography by Laziz Hamani) 2. A Jacques Adnet crystal lamp from Pascal Boyer Gallery. 3. 1940s parchment desk from Jacques Adnet. 4. Running Horse Weathervane from A.L. Jewell is one of the many unique finds at dealer The Splendid Peasant Ltd. 5. Swedish Flora cabinet by Josef Frank can be found at dealer Hostler Burrows. 6. Bruno beside his vintage Mercedes-Benz convertible.







**1STDIBS® SET THE ONLINE BUYING WORLD ON FIRE AND HAS BEEN A FAVORITE DESTINATION AMONG PROFESSIONAL INTERIOR DESIGNERS, COLLECTORS, AND DO-IT-YOURSELF DECORATORS FOR THE PAST TEN YEARS.** The business model has proven to be a successful one and the numbers speak for themselves. With over 1.5 million visits each month, the online retailer is in 22 markets (United States, Canada, London, and Paris) offering 2,200 items each week and reporting a half a billion dollars in revenue. Approximately 1,000 vendors pay a monthly fee plus fees for items posted, offering the best and most unique in antiques, jewelry, art, and vintage fashion. While Bruno is focusing on the moment, there are plans for expansion in the United Kingdom and France with a goal to “beef up the vintage fashion center.”

The site works for a variety of reasons. Bruno brought ease to the experience, creating an extremely user-friendly site where designers can quickly find an item. Bruno personally vets each dealer and handpicks the items that sell on the site, bringing a level of buyer confidence. And because every item is available, it's much faster than ordering and waiting eight weeks plus for an item. **“EVERYTHING IS ON THE WEB NOW WHICH IS VERY APPEALING FOR PEOPLE. IT ALLOWS US TO COMPETE IN A WAY AS NEVER BEFORE,” SAYS BRUNO, “AND THE SITE SAVES THE CONSUMER AND DESIGNER FROM PHYSICALLY SEARCHING FOR THE PERFECT ITEM.”**

1. Vendor Veronique Francois offers a glimpse of an earlier time with atlases, geographic maps, and anatomical tables. (Photography by Laziz Hamani) 2. Bruno's home in Sagaponack shows his love of 1940s period pieces. 3. A rare ceramic floor lamp with articulating head from 1stdibs® vendor and New York antiques dealer Wyeth. (Photography by Andrew French) 4. Gilbert Rodhe side-chairs, James Mont dining chair and floating console from Jean Royere can be found at Manhattan's Pascal Boyer Gallery. (Photography by Andrew French) 5. Mondo Cane's TriBeCa gallery is filled with the unusual and the unexpected, from French ceramic floor vases and rare American lighting to sleek Danish rosewood tables and a Plexiglas chair by architect Paul Rudolph. (Photography by Andrew French)







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And speaking of instant gratification, next up for the company is the launch of 1stdibs@NYDC at the New York Design Center. Tony dealers will set up shop on the center's 10th floor; the concept was so popular that a lottery had to be held with over 100 vendors vying for 60 spaces. Jim Druckman, President and CEO of the NYDC and Co-founder of 1stdibs@NYDC explains, "The New York Design Center gives 1stdibs—a revolutionary Internet company—a bricks-and-mortar presence. With this addition of prestigious antique dealers, the New York Design Center becomes a state-of-the-art, one-stop resource."

1stdibs@NYDC will bring a touch of Clingancourt to New York. As Druckman notes, "New York hasn't had a sophisticated, elegant group of antiques galleries that could rival the flea markets of Paris. We are providing an even better resource for both consumers and designers where they can shop for high-design antiques and mid-century items not just from one country or one city but from all over the U.S., Canada, and Europe." Local interior designers will recognize vendors such as Pascal Boyer, Wyeth, Mondo Cane, Hostler Burrows, and Randall Tysinger Antiques. Plans are to open on Saturdays to the public.

Bruno and his 1stdibs® concept is a perfect blend of passion and commerce. "I have a passion for old things that you really can't get anymore," he notes, and believes, "this grew out of my love for old houses as the two often go hand in hand." While lighting, single tables, and chairs are the most popular categories on the website, Bruno personally collects animal-themed objects. He shares that, "In the last two weeks I bought a pair of camel heads that are fiberglass covered in plaster to hang on the wall, and a fluffy wool kitty with a ceramic mouth!"

The site also boasts an online magazine that rivals many of the best print glossies in both content and glamour. *Introspective* magazine publishes over 20 stories a month that include book reviews, "Style Compass" interviews with top designers and collectors, and curated consumption via their "Saturday Shopping" features.

Precious downtime finds Bruno renovating his house in Southampton—every weekend to be exact. All things circle back to his passion, and decorating with antiques will naturally be factored in to the equation. He plans to add his love of 1940s-period antiques to the design mix as well as collections from his vast storage.

The Larchmont, New York, native is no doubt driven and credits his success to the best-selling self-help book *Think and Grow Rich* by Nathaniel Hill, which he picked up at the age of 19. Serving as a roadmap for his career, Bruno explains, **"WHAT I LEARNED FROM READING HILL IS THAT YOU HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT, BELIEVE IN IT, AND THEN GET READY FOR THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE."**

For Michael Bruno, the ride continues and we can't wait to see what he will conquer next.

1. A painting by Jim Oliveira sets the background for a vintage saw blade on a stand, an African mask, and a vase by the French ceramicist Rene Buthaud at dealer Mondo Cane. (Photography by Andrew French)  
 2. Dealer Mathew Bain features a collectible French yellow and black enamel dragon dial watch from Alain Silberstein. 3. Borge Mogensen's late 1940s-period table in sequoia and cherry from Hostler Burrows. 4. French multi-adjustable brass and painted steel wall sconces from the 1950s are a few of the treasures at Mondo Cane. 5. Bruno favors this pair of early Victorian cast-iron boot scrapers from Mallet. 6. Mid-century European lighting illuminates the room furnished with Vladimir Kagan sofa, Garouste and Bonetti ottoman among other Pascal Boyer brilliant pieces from the 1940s and 50s. (Photography by Andrew French)  
 7. The ultimate in luxury: A pair of his and hers Raleigh bicycles for Hermes from the 1900s can be found at Randall Tysinger. 8. An American in Paris doing what he loves best: Bruno shopping at the antique stores. (Photography by Tim Street Porter) 9. A Mercator projection world map from a Rockefeller Center office in the 1930s makes an impressive statement from Wyeth. (Photography by Andrew French) 10. A high back winged Italian club chair from Donzella is upholstered in gray velvet.

