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# OBSCURE OBJECTS OF DESIRE

Open the door to the **Cabinet de Curiosités** at Browns this week, and step into a world of rarefied luxury, says **Harriet Walker**

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As any weary shopper will know, the benefit of a new pair of eyes or an expert's gaze is invaluable. Wouldn't we all have personal stylists if we could afford one? Imagine then having not only your shopping basket but also your wardrobe, art collection, interiors and even summer holiday curated by the best in the business. This is what a new installation, unveiled this week at **fashion store Browns**, aims to do, just in time for Christmas.

The "Cabinet de Curiosités" is historically a Renaissance concept, describing the comprehensive collections of objets d'art from all walks of life cultivated by discerning gents of the era. But this latest interpretation, the brainchild of fashion consultant and sophisticate Thomas Erber, started out in the cognoscent's favourite Parisian haunt, the boutique Colette, which boasts an eclectic mash-up of high-end fashion and cartoonish counter-culture. It's a project that brings together the best of almost anything you could ask, overseen by Erber himself and available to buy in limited editions as part of the **Browns showcase**.

"One day, I had this idea," he explains. "I should make a contemporary cabinet of curiosities including all the fields I was passionate and curious about, to offer a new sort of visibility to all the designers, artists and brands that I was in love with." Erber is something of a latter-day Renaissance man himself, and fits the role of a jet-setting connoisseur. He worked across fashion and travel journalism, helping to launch the French style magazines *Jalouse* and *L'Optimim*, as well as *L'Officiel Voyage*, before becoming editor of *Le Monde's* lifestyle section and contributing to *Vogue Homme*. Subtle and well-scrubbed cachet and credentials? Erber has both in spades.

He has also collaborated and consulted with names such as Chanel, Cartier and Boucheron, and has used the Cabinet de Curiosités as a means

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of showcasing the work of brands and designers that he considers craftsmen and -women.

"Isn't it magic?" he asks, charismatic and erudite. "To make fashion live beside music, beside high-end watch-making, beside literature, beside jewels, beside contemporary art. Everything is coherent

and exciting, with real meaning." Although many of the pieces require a suitable Renaissance princely fortune (a stainless-steel dressing table by London-based craftsman Paul Kelley comes in at £54,000), there are plenty of accessible treats within the selection. A chic marl grey T-shirt designed by Erber as a memento of the project is £45, while candles and leather notebooks bear the Cabinet de Curiosités monogram. There is also an exhibition within the range of photographers whom Erber holds dear, such as Seal and John Pepper, as well as travel suggestions for the more intrepid shopper – a family road trip across Uruguay, or a safari in Namibia, one of the countries that will benefit from the charitable proceeds of the project.

"It's a true experience of quality, craftsmanship and a sense of passion, that we hope the customer will be able to share," explains Browns' creative director, Caroline Burstein, of what will constitute the store's Christmas displays. Customers will be handed a map with which they can discover some of the magical pieces Erber has selected and placed around the store. "And last but not least, 10 per cent of all proceeds go to Thomas's

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**Curiouser and curiouser**  
From left: Sea 1 print by Elina Kechicheva £2760; jacket £1200, Maison Kitsuné; scarf £175, Browns; ankle boots £1650, Pierre Hardy; notebook £45, Leathersmith



**Curious talent:**  
fashion consultant  
Thomas Erber,  
above

chosen charities, who work on conservation and community in Namibia, a cause close to his heart." "It's real teamwork," Erber adds, "not an ego trip. It's a generous and honest attempt to redefine luxury in a world that seems to be a little bit confused about everything. Luxury is not a supermarket. I've always hated having the same bag as my neighbour, so I've spent my entire life trying to find a different one." With labels such as Pierre Hardy, Kitsuné, Manolo Blahnik and Rodarte signed up, there's certainly something for every taste.

Browns and Thomas Erber's 'Cabaret de Curiosité' launches on Wednesday; brownsfashion.com

## The Ten Best Eyeshadows

Chosen by REBECCA GONSALVES



**2. Eye Studio Colour Explosion duo in Green/Gold**  
£6.99, Maybelline New York, Boots nationwide  
This looks intimidating in the pack, but is easy to use. Layer gold over the green to make it sparkle.

**5. Les Oeillades in Blondette Fatale**  
£33, Lancôme, available nationwide  
These flattering shades range from bronze to rose gold, with taupe for a rich, smoky base colour.

**8. L'Ombre Noir**  
£34, Givenchy, 01932 233 824  
This multi-purpose brick of intense blue black can be applied either wet or dry with one of three brushes to achieve different, dramatic effects.

**3. Metal-X eyeshadow in Venetian Tarnish**  
£15.50, MAC, maccosmetics.co.uk  
Use your fingertip to build up an intense smudge of this rich bronze shade on your upper eyelid.

**6. Eyes to Kill**  
£24.50, Giorgio Armani, available nationwide  
This high-shine silk formula can be blended to leave a sheer sheen or built up to achieve something more akin to molten metal.

**9. Palette Noir Terriblement**  
£39, Yves Saint Laurent, available nationwide  
The spirit of YSL's Le Smoking is distilled into the five shades in this gold palette - which comes with its own pin-tucked cummerbund.

**1. Smokey Eye Palette in Smouldering**  
£10, Topshop, topshop.com  
This grungy palette incorporating shades of the purple spectrum is flattering for blue and green eyes.

**4. Pure Pigment in Ore**  
£18.50, Illamasqua, illamasqua.com  
A rich bronze shot through with multicoloured microscopic flecks of glitter to catch the light - add to bronzer to highlight cheekbones.

**7. Ombre Essentielle in Blazing Gold**  
£21, Chanel, available nationwide  
Part of the Christmas collection, this limited-edition shade from prestige brand Chanel is a lovely pale gold with a fine iridescence.

**10. Eye Shadow Quad in Cocoa**  
£36.50, Dolce & Gabbana, burrod.com  
The biscuity shades in the palette look good enough to eat, and even better when applied with a delicate touch.