



LOOK OUT BELOW: Basil Racuk, as seen from the mezzanine of his bedroom loft, takes a quiet moment on a Charles Pollock for Knoll chair in his living room.

CARTE BLANCHE

Behold accessory designer **Basil Racuk's** artful digs.

by LEILANI MARIE LABONG

“This is what 25 years of collecting looks like,” says bag and accessories designer Basil Racuk, surveying his sunny live-work loft located in a former turn-of-the-century laundry factory in Oakland. But even decades of acquisition—mostly of contemporary works by emerging and established artists and designers—hardly amounts to sensory overload here. Instead, alpine-high ceilings and vast white walls allow Racuk's prized possessions to command their own space in a gallery-like tableau that's spare, curated, and very special.

“My greatest joy is to exist with works that change the way I perceive art and design,” says the SF native. To wit, the home's centerpiece is a large installation by Reno artist Katie Lewis, who created an amorphous map of her health concerns by clustering hordes of dress pins and thousands of tiny penciled-in dates—all on a 25-foot wall-cum-canvas. Its intricacy can be contemplated from various viewpoints, like the living room's leather sling chairs by Charles Pollock for Knoll with original, age-appropriately tattered cushions (“My cat, Fred, has spent a lot of time on them,” says Racuk). Or the bedroom loft, where a sculptural wooden

headboard from Mexico and a colorful late-career print by fashion illustrator René Gruau attempt to divert your interest.

But inevitably, curiosity lures houseguests to peer from over the bedroom's mezzanine for a bird's-eye view of the Lewis piece. “I recommend that everyone lives with art,” says Racuk, 47. “Over time, you can understand how the work came to be.”

While it may be more interesting to discover this level of nuance in Racuk's standout pieces (such as an early work by SF photographer Sean McFarland or delicate glass domes by local artist Travis Sandoval), he thinks of a humble 1968 sugar bowl by Environmental Ceramics—a \$3 Thrift Town score—as his most considered find. Its simple egg shape resonates deeply with Racuk, who strives for the same thoughtful clarity when designing his leather weekenders, briefcases, and clutches in the loft's ground-floor studio. Crisp seam-on-seam construction and discreet hardware contribute to the sculptural purity of Racuk's masterpieces—available locally at The NWBLK in the Mission—and exemplify his attachment to a heartfelt crafting process. “I'm very sensitive to how something is produced,” he says. “If that makes me precious, so be it.” // BASILRACUK.COM X

ANDREW PAYNTER



▲ **SEW INSPIRED:** Racuk's loft does double duty as his home and design studio. Here, he sews each of his pieces by hand on a 1930s Singer sewing machine beneath prints by New York artist Ruth Marten and Ruth Kneass—an Oakland-based artist and friend.

MAN ON FIRE: ►

This dress form gives “some mood to what my point-of-view is at the moment,” says Racuk. It currently wears Racuk's Burning Man uniform—a shirt and bag he made specifically for the festival. The mask is by camp mate Lynda White.



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BAGGAGE CHECK: ►

Racuk's portfolio of accessories are presented on a light table in his studio, which doubles as a showroom. He found the custom piece—built by a San Francisco photographer and woodworker—on Craigslist. The Jack bag in waxed calf sits atop a Manzanita branch.



◄ STATES OF REST:

A fan of René Gruau's iconic advertisements, Racuk picked up this print, “Bemberg La Fodera Che Va Forte,” at New York City's Housing Works. “I love the ‘70's loucheness of the piece,” says Racuk. He found the headboard at an antique shop in Mexico.

▲ **PINTERESTING:** Reno artist Katie Lewis took an expanse of white wall in Racuk's living room as a canvas for the exploration of her medical history, entitled “450 Days,” sticking dressing pins into the wall and scrawling in dates that relate back to a health log. Commissioned by Racuk, the piece took two weeks to install. “I recommend installations to any collector who has space to dedicate,” he says.

