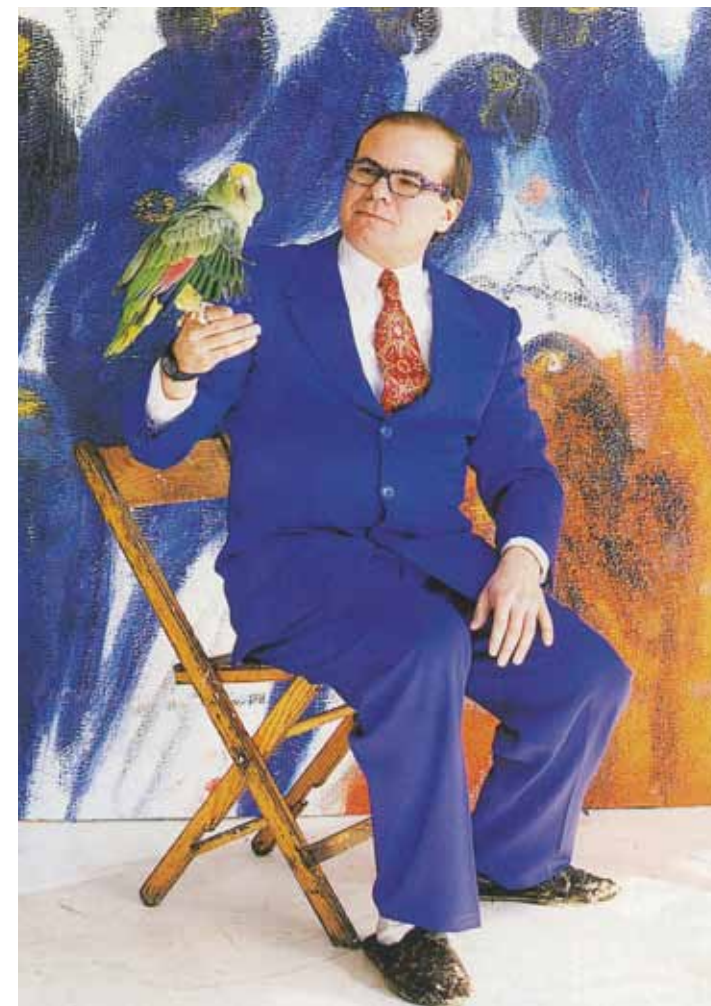




BY JENNIFER COPLEY IMAGES COURTESY OF MARCO RICCA

# THE ALCHEMY OF ART

To describe Hunt Slonem's art and home as colourful would be an understatement. Welcome to Slonem's magical world



**THIS PAGE**  
Hunt Slonem and his pet parrot

**OPPOSITE**  
The grand staircase of this plantation home

Many in the art world would prefer to refer to Hunt Slonem as an alchemist instead of an artist. "I can tell when its right intuitively. Things are led into my path for a purpose, for the creation of the environments and they are ever-changing and improving and growing," explains the prolific New York-based genius of his formula for creativity. As he speaks, a cacophony of exotic birds can be heard over the sound of records playing in the background: opera or raw Delta Blues.

Hunt's environments mirror his artistic practice – they are expressive, spectacular and grandiose. His homes and studios illuminate his passions, experiences and inspirations – from his love of travel and nature to his unique feeling for colour, texture and pattern. Slonem has been a mainstay of the New York art world since the 1970s, where alongside figures such as Andy Warhol and Truman Capote, he was integral to the city's art and social scene. He has held over 300 solo shows across the world and appears in the permanent collections of 250 museums including the Guggenheim, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney, and the Moreau Foundation.





#### ON THE HUNT

The scale and ambition with which Slonem approaches his artistic practice infuses his approach to property. Slonem consults regularly with psychic channelers and healers. The messages he has received from the spirit world have provided the subject matter for many paintings and have led to the purchase of new homes.

A 1920s spiritualist Xacha Obrenovitch once predicted that he would purchase a plantation home in Louisiana. Since studying at Tulane University in New Orleans, Slonem has a long held fascination with the historic 19th century properties of the Deep South. And true to the prophecy, the artist purchased Albania, a huge Louisiana plantation house in 1994. The following year a spiritual advisor also foretold that he would purchase another property, and that was what led Slonem to this Lakeside property.

#### LAKESIDE'S GLORY

Lakeside was built in 1832 and boasts 27 rooms, 16-foot ceilings and 30-foot staircases. The plantation was once owned by the Marquis de Lafayette who, along with close friends Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, James Monroe, John Adams, and Robert Livingston, had been instrumental in the Louisiana Purchase. This pale pink antebellum house sits among trees that date back to more than 1,000 years and is listed in the National

#### THIS PAGE

This plantation home comes with a 184-year history

#### OPPOSITE

Slonem prefers to let the walls age naturally in order to preserve their rich colour





Register of Historic Places in Louisiana. It is the largest property in the isolated Pointe Coupee Parish and very unusual for its scale and detail. Lakeside is a special place for the artist: “It’s very primordial. It’s the quietest place that I go to. It has giant ancient oak trees that were called King Trees. I meditate there and work with healers there.”

#### OLD WEALTH

“I completely preserve historical architecture. I don’t change anything,” states Slonem. When he bought Lakeside it was barely furnished with very little in it and nothing much of value except a piano - the only item not destroyed during the Civil War. While he has decorated the property, not one part of the structure has been remodelled and the walls of the hall have been left untouched.

The artist allows the history of the building to reveal itself by conserving its original “patina,” restoring architectural features, and by filling rooms with historically appropriate paintings, colours, collections and plants. In his portraits, the artist depicts subjects that come to him through mediums and spiritual advisors. In these paintings a kind of ghosting takes place, where the spirit of a person shimmers beneath the surface. The same effect is achieved in his plantation homes. Slonem conserves the presence of history: the spirit of its inhabitants shimmering beneath deep red and azure blue walls.

#### THIS PAGE

The homeowner worked with paint specialist Ellen Kennon to create the rich wall colours

#### OPPOSITE

Slonem confesses to be a collector of things beautiful







*“I’m just obsessed by the concept of the Victorian conservatory as part of the living environment.”*



**LOCATION**  
Louisiana

**TYPE OF HOME**  
Historical Mansion

**RESIDENTS**  
1

**INTERIOR DESIGN**  
Hunt Slonem

**THE ARTIST**  
Hunt Slonem’s latest book *When Art Meets Design* is available at all good bookstores



### GREEN HUES

The greenery that surrounds and permeates Lakeside adds a further dimension to the property. It is set in 15 acres of land and Slonem surrounds himself with lush and exotic flora and fauna. In keeping with the period of the house, he cultivates plants both inside and outside of property, “I’m just obsessed by the concept of the Victorian conservatory as part of the living environment,” he enthuses, “I’m constantly inventing gardens and I’m constantly buying 19th century garden furniture and ferns and having brick surrounds made for gardens and planting more and more varieties of plants.” He collects hundreds of orchids and nurtures the ground’s ancient trees. Lakeside’s lush vegetation is both decorative and life giving: adding to the sense of escapism and meditative respite the property affords the artist to aid his pursuits.

### COLOURS & LIGHT

Just as his paintings are celebrations of the emotive properties of colour, so too are the walls of Lakeside. He works with Louisiana paint specialist Ellen Kennon to create historically accurate hues that he then applies on an ambitious scale, using great swathes of deep, rich colour. “I use colour to enliven dreary space and breath new life, to try to work with blocks of colour that feed off one another and that are almost impossible to use, I like to push colour to new limits and possibilities. Things that I thought would never work may after all.”



### THIS PAGE

Bold strokes of colour imbue each space with its own personality; Portraits and antiques abound in every room

### OPPOSITE

Decadent old world charm of the bedroom; Quaint finds adorn the shelves in the rooms; The soft blue paint in one of the bedrooms was inspired by the room’s history

