JANUARY

An artwork by Euan Myles, from the collection of Amsterdam lawyer Aernoud Bourdrez, see page 082

Below, 'Frank' desk by John Slater, see Graduate Directory, page 086

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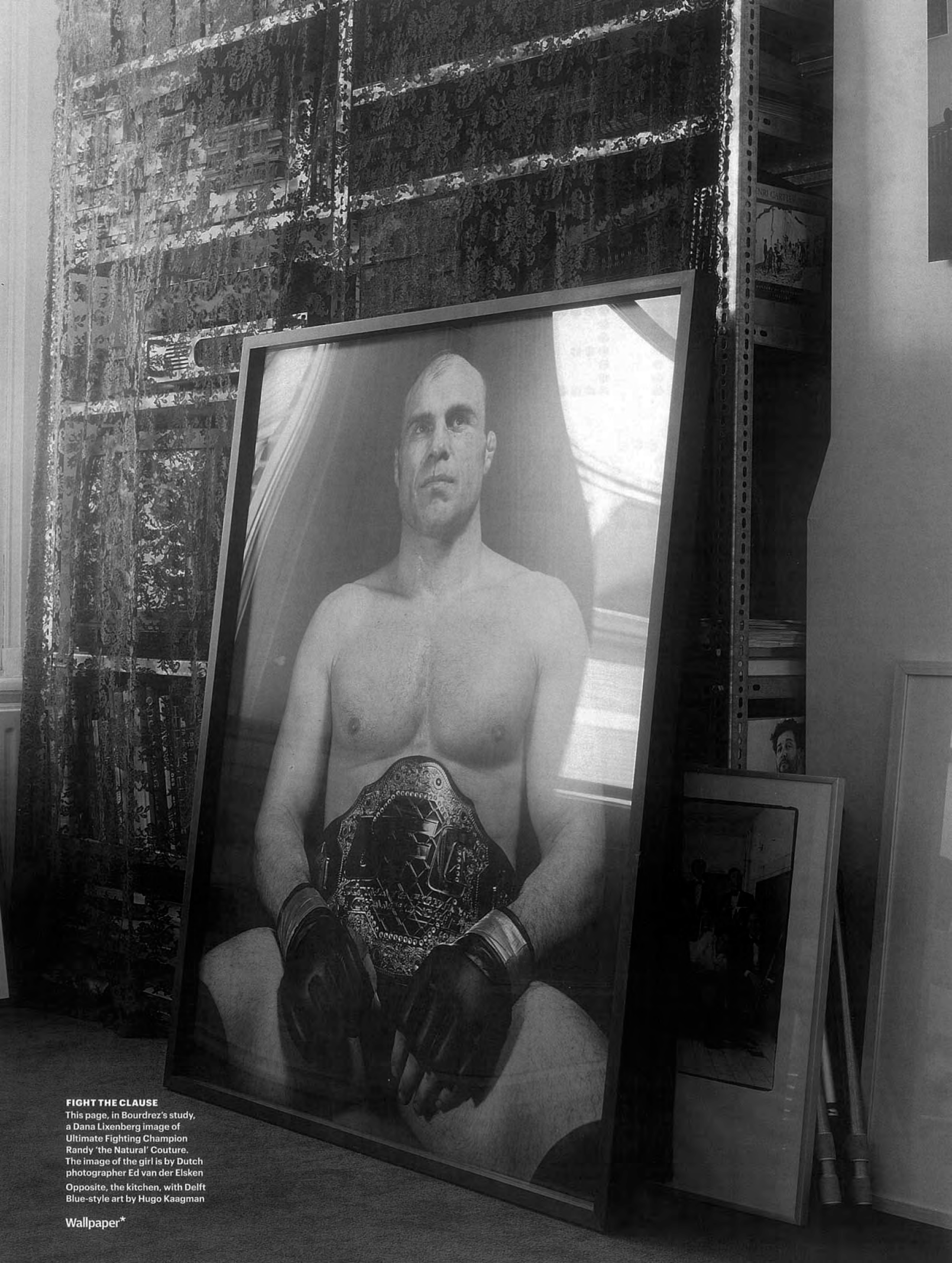

FIGHT THE CLAUSE
This page, in Bourdrez's study, a Dana Lixenberg image of Ultimate Fighting Champion Randy 'the Natural' Couture. The image of the girl is by Dutch photographer Ed van der Elsken

Opposite, the kitchen, with Delft Blue-style art by Hugo Kaagman

Dutch treat

For the favourite lawyer of Dutch artists and creative types, bringing work home has its plus points

PHOTOGRAPHY: MISHA DE RIDDER WRITER: ELLIE STATHAKI

What do Rotterdam-based architects OMA, New York-based photographer Dana Lixenberg and Haarlem-born graffiti artist and illustrator Hugo Kaagman have in common? Apart from sharing Dutch origins, they all also occasionally turn to the same lawyer, Aernoud Bourdrez, for advice. From his high-ceilinged headquarters, a former school off Amsterdam's Amstel river, the Utrecht-born lawyer has specialised in advising creative clients on intellectual property issues for the last four years, following his motto: 'Be tough on the case, but soft on the people.'

Bourdrez, 35, returned to Amsterdam after a short stint in New York, working at the United Nations headquarters, to join well-known international law firm Allen & Overy. However, he soon felt uneasy within the framework of a big corporate company, and this, combined with his personal interest in the arts, led him to seek employment in a smaller Dutch firm. 'I believe that lawyers are making things far too difficult and, in my experience, most creatives that need advice don't visit big law firms,' he says, explaining his preference for smaller companies. 'I just want to help clients do what they can.' In 2004, he set up his own small, tight-knit office, Use Intellectual Property (Use-IP), and started working exclusively with the creative sector.

His long client list includes graphic designers and illustrators, advertising agencies, photographers and three or four architectural practices. He has worked for Rem Koolhaas's OMA for more than a year and has already successfully settled one case for the company. Bourdrez's cases range from the copying of logos to the illegal reproduction of images. 'I advise OMA in the field of intellectual property rights, such as the copyrights vested in the buildings and visuals, and the portrait rights of the individual architects,' explains the lawyer. He adds that to use a structure's image for profit, the permission of the architect is required, as it is for certain changes that an owner may wish to make, such as changing the building's original design.

Bourdrez's interest in the arts isn't limited to his professional life. His teenage ambition to study fine art fell through – 'And now I know it was for the best, both for me and for the art world!' he jokes – but he went on to feed his passion by fervently collecting artwork and, occasionally, vintage design. Most, although not all, of his collection has been created by his clients. Bourdrez acquires pieces as presents and also buys directly from artists or at auction, as is the case with a set of chairs he owns, which previously furnished the Dutch Court of Appeal.

The lawyer's home for the last three years has been an Amsterdam town house that is almost 100 years old. It is full of artwork, almost doubling as a gallery. 'Art fascinates me,' says Bourdrez, 'and my office and house wouldn't have been as nice without these pictures.'

The house's amazing kitchen, with a vintage vending machine on the wall, features airbrushed murals in the Delft Blue style, by artist Hugo Kaagman. 'I saw his work on a British Airways flight [Kaagman decorated the tails of some BA planes as part of a 1997 branding campaign], and loved it, so I asked him to do something for me,' says Bourdrez. 'It took him three days to do the kitchen and he says it's one of his best pieces of work.'

Bourdrez's collection now comprises more than 30 artworks, by Kaagman, Dorothee Bavinck, Morad Bouchakour, Paul Huf, Jacqueline Hassink, »

Meindert Koelink, Dana Lixenberg, Pieter 'Parra' Janssen, Thijs Kauffmann, Leonie Mijnlieff, Pieter Postma, Mathijs Schoon, Cornelie Tollens, Ed van der Elsken and Rob van Koningsbruggen.

The collection can be said to stem partly from Bourdrez's philosophy of working very closely with his clients. That he purchases work from them, or is gifted pieces, is evidence of the mutual bond of trust and respect that results from this way of working. Just as the Finns are said to close their most important deals in a sauna, Bourdrez is a keen supporter of a friendly, slightly informal, perhaps very Dutch, approach.

'I always say, instead of exchanging stiff, formal letters, let's start by eating a sandwich together,' he explains. Trust and good-will play a primary role in the lawyer's methods and philosophy, and most of the time his negotiations triumph, avoiding the courts altogether. One of the cases he is most proud of, for example, not only resulted in a friendly compromise between the two parties, but also led to his artist client actually collaborating with the company with which he had been in conflict.

Bourdrez's collection includes visual and conceptual art, photography and design, and although he owns nothing produced by an architect as yet, he would gladly give carte blanche to any one of his clients to design a house for him. Indeed, he could use the space. The collection is constantly growing, and Bourdrez is planning to commission additional, site-specific art to decorate a new and bigger Amsterdam house he has already bought – like his office, a former school.

APPEALING CASE
Top, chairs from the Dutch Court of Appeal, bought at auction, and a 1964 photograph, *Bonny*, by Paul Huf. Above, over the fireplace is a photo by Cornelie Tollens

Sadly, he may have to leave his lovely Kaagman-decorated kitchen behind, as moving the artwork would awkwardly detach it from its original architectural context. 'Somebody even offered to buy it, but I said that if they wanted to take it away from this house, they just shouldn't buy it at all,' he says.

Apart from his work as a lawyer and his plans for his developing art collection, Bourdrez also finds time to coach a law student and has two books in the pipeline – one about solving conflicts and another about copyrights in the visual world. They are unlikely to be your run-of-the-mill dry legal tomes, however. As with art, Bourdrez feels that legalese should be creatively presented and accessible to all. 'Just like in my everyday law practice, one must be tough, but friendly, and most of all keep things simple.' ✱

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