

Gordon Elliott (left) and Michael Eyes in the upstairs hallway of their Sydney terrace. Eyes holds Rick Amor's Boy on a Bathing Box painting. The work above the mirror is by John Coburn. All other pieces are by James Gleeson. Details, last pages.

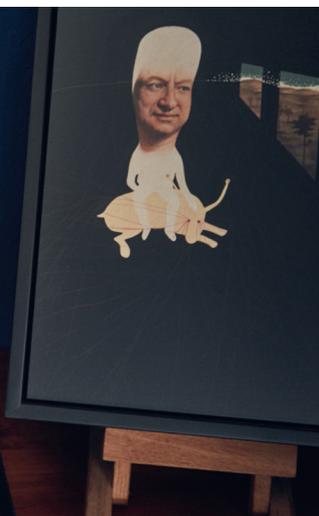
STYLIST: BRAD HOMES; GROOMING: JOEL PHILLIPS; ELLIOTT WEARS HERITAGE JACKET, SILK SHIRT, GILET, PANTS, SHOES, AND NECKLACE WITH WOLF HEAD, ALL BY GLUCCI. EYES WEARS VALENTINO JACKET AND TRACK PANT (AVAILABLE FROM HARROLD'S), PAUL SMITH POLO SHIRT AND BALLY MENS GAVINO SNEAKERS. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

Art house

From their home in a corner of inner Sydney, two art aficionados lovingly curate a wall-to-wall selection of eclectic works.

By Freya Herring Photographed by Hugh Stewart

ART & DESIGN



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: *Mark Whalen's Constraints; Tanmaya Bingham's 3 LSFS. Cherry Hood's Tuyen (partially seen); various works by Clara Adolphs.*



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *ceramics by Bronwynne Cornish and Nell (on stool); Fabergé plate by Rosenthal. Pinkie and Lust sculptures by Todd Fuller. Eyes and Elliott in the dining room alongside works by Diana Lee-Gobbitt, Ross Watson, Jimmy Rix, Madeleine Child, Euan Macleod, Alex Seton and Terry Stringer. Details, last pages.*



There is something problematic about buying art for one's own home — and it is that you, and those around you, are the only people who get to experience that artwork for as long as you have it. There are masterful works by Picasso, Kahlo and Bacon holed up in people's living rooms all over the world. For the rest of us, it's a loss.

That was never going to be an issue for Gordon Elliott and Michael Eyes. They've been collecting fine art, from across a range of disciplines, for a decade-and-a-half. Today, they have some 326 works in their three-bedroom terrace house in Sydney's Erskineville.

Paintings and sculptures decorate every wall and crevice, and feature in both their front and back gardens. A neon piece by Melbourne artist Adam Stone even adorns the ceiling. They don't keep it to themselves, either — their home is open to the public by appointment, and they will even throw in a glass of champagne while you're having a gander. "We want to share our collection," says Elliott, "and to encourage other people to actually look at art, and realise that they can have lots of it in their own home if they want."

Neither he nor Eyes is wealthy — Elliott is a dance teacher and Eyes runs an independent bookshop in Woollahra. They pay off artworks slowly, rather than put all the money upfront. "Once you are known by the galleries, you can normally make arrangements with them to pay off works," says Elliott.

As soon as you approach their house, a sculpture by New Zealand's Terry Stringer greets you, a bronze wing raised in welcome. The screen door is a commissioned work by Sydney's Michael Snape. Primal, animalistic sculptures by fellow local Todd Fuller sit on furnishings below giant paintings by artists as diverse as Spanish-based Australian artist Peter Churcher and New Zealand's Jess Johnson. There is video art; the footstool is a sculpture; other sculptures by Sydney's Alex Seton dot the premises. There are also works by Charles Blackman, Sidney Nolan, Jeffrey Smart, James Gleeson and Julian Meagher.

In the garden, a giant steel piece by New Zealand sculptor Gregor Gregar overlooks the living area, while, upstairs in the spare bedroom, paintings by Southern Highlands-based Clara Adolphs overlook a male nude bedspread picked up from South African artist Brooke Schafer when Elliott and Eyes were in Pretoria. This art-packed house is reminiscent of the Paris Salon. "People are overwhelmed by the amount and diversity," says Elliott. "And they seem really appreciative that we've opened our house up and invited them in," adds Eyes.

With no children, the couple are in the throes of planning the future of their collection. "By the time we kick the bucket, we want to set up a foundation where we'll pick 10 works and give them to either a regional gallery or an institution as The Elliott Eyes Collection," says Elliott. Everything else will be sold, and 70 per cent of the annual interest will be gifted to an Australian or Kiwi artist each year, who will produce one work to further the collection. "And they could use the money for whatever they want," he notes.

Until then, the couple will continue to welcome people into their home, to inspire and drive collecting. "Inviting people has never been a problem," says Eyes. "The people we've met — collectors and people who love art — it's been wonderful." *VL*

Visit theelliotteyescollection.com

EYES WEARS AGNE STUDIOS TURTLE NECK; STELLA MCCARTNEY DOUBLE-BREASTED JACKET (AVAILABLE AT HARGOLDS); BULGARI OCTO WATCH; ELLIOTT WEARS IVORY TURTLE JACKET AND PANTS; AND SILK SHIRT. ALL BY GUCCI; DEZIGAS; LAST ZIGAS