

CONVERSATION STARTER

The art-filled walls speak volumes in Brett Mickan's sumptuous home.
Rebecca Gross takes a tour.





OPPOSITE PAGE: **Vintage finds, Lunatiques, Alexandria NSW.** THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT: **Wall Paper: Harlequin Amazilia Nuvola by Domestic Textiles Corp. adorns the bedroom walls.** THIS PAGE, TOP RIGHT: **Painting purchased while visiting South Australia: Bails Myocum, Study of a Shed. Oil on canvas. Artwork in background: Dick and Fluff, Framed print from children's book Dick and Dora. Purchased from a dealer, in Miami, Florida** THIS PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT: **Wallpaper: Versailles Garden by Cole & Son / Radford Furnishings** THIS PAGE BOTTOM RIGHT: **Oil paintings are vintage finds purchased while on vacation in Florida.**



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BRETT MICKAN

Guests in the home of interior designer **Brett Mickan** will never be stuck for conversation. Besides the good company, the house is a sumptuous display of colour, pattern and art that sparks thought and discussion for those who live there and those who visit. “I selected the art because it speaks to me or about an experience,” says Brett, who heads up eponymously named Brett Mickan Interior Design.

The house in Sydney’s inner west is a place for Brett and his partner to live, work and entertain. Set within a new building located on the site of a former fabric warehouse, the exterior

is designed to reflect its industrial origins. The interior, however, is modern and luxurious yet still incorporates hints of the site’s textile and manufacturing past: aged-brass hardware, grey granite and blue stone benchtops, industrial-looking fittings and colourful and patterned fabrics. “I wanted to surprise visitors when they enter the space,” says Brett. “The façade is quite plain and commercial, so I wanted the interiors to be unexpectedly luxurious and inviting.”

Throughout the home are artworks Brett has collected over many years, including vintage finds, travel discoveries and paintings by friends. In some cases a piece serves as the inspiration



for the design scheme of a room, and in others it is to complement the scheme. "It's never about selecting art that works with a room. It's about adjusting the balance of colour and texture within a room to make the art fit seamlessly," Brett explains. In the living area, two turquoise-coloured paintings, *Abstract Street Scene* and *Key West Palm Tree*, stand out against the soft grey wall and upholstered armchair, while the blush tones of Slim Aarons' photo of Joan Collins, titled *Pretty in Pink*, echo the hues of the grey and pink fabric.

The placement of art in relation to lampshades and decorative objects – and vice versa – is fluid, asymmetrical and dependent. A landscape is centred on the wall above the bed in the guest bedroom, while a portrait is positioned higher to allow for a bedside lamp, which becomes part of the visual ensemble.

This more flexible placement of artworks also serves to balance areas and guides visitors through the home. Grouped artworks, such as the eclectic mix above the sofa, can anchor seating areas, as well as creating a sense of equilibrium in more graphic rooms. This is evident in the dining room where a cluster of abstracts and watercolours offset the vibrant "Versailles" wallpaper. A framed print from the children's book *Dick and Dora* is on the adjacent stairwell. Positioned alone, it brings depth and focus to the space, as does the artwork on the stairwell by the terrace. The vintage painting titled *Scarlett O'Hara Meets Ashley at the Train* depicts the fictional character from *Gone With the Wind*, a favourite movie of the owners.

"Buy art that speaks to you or talks about you," Brett advises. "If the art in this house could talk it would be one loud conversation."

OPPOSITE PAGE: **Artwork L-R: Joerg Dressler, *Early Autumn*. Oil on Canvas, Purchased while on vacation in Massachusetts. Large 1970s abstract painting was a vintage find from Florida. SHGE, Small spray-painted graffiti art, purchased in Sydney.** THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT: **An abstract oil painting featured on the kitchen wall was a vintage find, purchased in Florida.** THIS PAGE TOP RIGHT: **Luxe blue stone benchtops feature in the kitchen.** THIS PAGE BOTTOM RIGHT: **A collection of treasured vintage paintings hang above the bedhead.**

