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It's not just people Paul Davies chooses to have around him, it's also a host of favourite artworks, including *Snake*, by Rhys Lee (above), *Pool Side* photograph, by Sam Ash, above a Morgan Shimeld sculpture, *Traced 1* (below right), and *Bilby*, by Guy Maestri (below, at right). All other art is by Paul himself or girlfriend Sarah Noye (below), whose fashion illustration (above right) and *Handmade Dress* (above) contribute to the charm of their gallery-style home.



IN A CROWD

ARTIST PAUL DAVIES IS HAPPIEST WHEN HE IS COMPLETELY SURROUNDED WORDS **KERRIE DAVIES** STYLING **VANESSA COLYER TAY** PHOTOGRAPHS **SAM McADAM**

The cliché of the artist who thrives on solitude doesn't apply to Paul Davies. This Sydneysider, fast gaining recognition for his paintings of modernist houses, shares his studio warehouse with fashion designers and art directors and thrives on the buzz of its inner-city location.

"I used to work alone and I found it frustrating and isolating. You take yourself too seriously," he says. "I like that I can walk away from a painting and have a coffee downstairs or the guys in the warehouse can come into my studio. It's still nerve-racking to let people see what I'm working on, but I like the feedback. And I take photos home to show [girlfriend] Sarah. As a fashion-design student, she's very aware of colour and composition, so I value her opinion."

Home for the couple is in Sydney's Darlinghurst, and it's in this crowded space that Paul's real passions can be found. Reference materials for his own work include a huge collection of architecture books (especially on Bauhaus and Harry Seidler), art monographs,

photos from travels, postcards and newspaper clippings. In fact, it was a photograph found in a magazine on a recent ski trip to Aspen, Colorado, that sparked Paul's enormous, eerie diptych of a bungalow hidden in bare-branched trees – the largest of 15 works that will feature in his new show at Tim Olsen Gallery.

But his primary addiction is art. "I could have bought a house by now with what I've spent on art," Paul laughs. "I like coming home to enjoy other people's ideas."

"I keep one painting from each of my own shows as a record and I've kept some early works I did on found timber while working in London after leaving university," he says. "Looking back, I think they were the beginnings of this style of work that I'm doing now. The abstract works are mine, too. They help me in not being too rigid." *Paul Davies' exhibition will run from April 28 to May 17 at Tim Olsen Gallery, Woollahra NSW, (02) 9327 3922 or www.timolsengallery.com.*