

INSIDE **OUT**



DAVID BROMLEY

FEW THINGS CAN LURE ARTIST DAVID BROMLEY, A SELF-CONFESSED WORKAHOLIC, AWAY FROM HIS MELBOURNE STUDIO - BUT FURNITURE SHOPPING AND MUSIC ARE TWO OF THEM

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David Bromley (opposite page) in his studio. Of his work, he says, "I don't know how many paintings I do. I just get busy and don't think too much about it." When not being used as a creative space, the upstairs area of his studio (this page) makes a pleasant living area. The sideboard and chairs are indicative of the pieces he sells in his A Day on Earth stores. Above the sideboard are two of his large-scale works, *Gemma* (left) and *Billy*. →



David and partner Tori Dixon-Whittle in the dining room of their home (left), with baby Willem and daughter Holly. The chairs are Danish designs, while the table is by Adelaide-based Khai Liew. A room in David's studio (below) is dominated by a colourful work by McLean Edwards and filled with collectables. "I see beauty in an idyllic childhood," says David of his *Children's Adventure* series (bottom).



There's a lot going on in artist David Bromley's work studio, where he spends a good chunk of his weekends, and there's a lot going on in his mind, too. Walk through the door of his artistic retreat in Melbourne's South Yarra and you'll notice paintings everywhere, sculptures covering most surfaces and magazines stacked up in piles. It's not such a stretch to imagine his mind working like this, too, since he always seems to have several things on the go.

Right now, that includes his art – paintings, sculptures, ceramics and embroidered works, all of which are sold locally and in far-flung places, including Tokyo, New York and London – and a film he's making called *I Could Be Me*, which is narrated by actor Hugo Weaving. Then take into account his *A Day on Earth* collectables and furniture stores (two in Victoria and one set to open in Queensland), two residences, and the fact he's constantly renovating houses, and you get an idea of just how busy this man is. "Sometimes you can juggle a lot of balls, but sometimes you drop them," David notes philosophically of his hectic lifestyle.

And that's just what he does professionally. In his personal life, he and partner Tori Dixon-Whittle – who both moved to Melbourne's South Yarra from Adelaide less than a year ago – have just welcomed baby Willem to the world, a brother for their three-year-old daughter Holly. (David also has a 25-year-old son, Dale, from a previous marriage.) It wouldn't seem he'd have much time left over for weekend activities, but for David, the work week and weekend blend into one. "I hardly know where I am at times, because I'm in my own bubble to some degree," he admits. When he ventures from home into the studio, his family often comes along. Holly paints, while Tori and David collaborate on many aspects of his work. Every few days, friends are invited over for a studio lunch. "Tori used to own a cafe, so she's a really great cook."

In their rare down-time together, the family stick to well-rehearsed routines. "I'm a creature of habit," says David, who likes going to local Italian restaurant La Lucciola every few days. "I'll go to the same place and order the same food, whereas Tori will say, 'Let's try this place.'" The Prahran Market, for fresh produce, is also a regular pit stop.

Another one of his habits is collecting. "I'm a collectaholic," confesses David, whose hunter-gatherer style is dictated somewhat by geography: he refuses to travel by plane. "I think that's probably where my love of collecting stuff comes from," he explains. "I 'travel' by getting stuff, and creating a bit of a world of my own." →





In a library-like corner of the studio, a filing cabinet from Melbourne store Tarlo & Graham houses a collection of knick-knacks. The Grant Featherston chaise, picked up at antiques store Geoffrey Hatty Applied Arts, provides the ideal spot to peruse one of David's many books.

a weekend with ...





“I’M A FAN OF FLAMBOYANT ART. I DON’T LIKE TO BE THE KIND OF ARTIST WHOSE WORK HIDES IN A CORNER”

Daughter Holly “is very artistic and draws with both her left and right hands. She’s very determined,” says her proud father, who is encouraging her to be an artist, too. “She can be my assistant, or, if she’s very good, I’ll be her assistant.” Behind the pair is a large nude entitled *Belinda*. →



Two prototypes for David's sculptures guard the entrance to a reading nook in the studio. The graphic poster is a gift from Australian pop artist Martin Sharp.



David, with his Ducati motorcycle, at the front of his studio (**left**). Cyberia in South Yarra (**above**) is a clothes store for which David does the window display, while Greville Records in Prahran (**below**) is a favourite weekend haunt – “Music is one of the biggest things in my life,” he admits. David and Tori are frequent diners at Italian restaurant La Lucciola (**bottom**).

That world is apparent in his diverse artwork, which ranges from nostalgic paintings and wood cut-outs of childhood (which form part of his *Children's Adventure* series) to his gold- and silver-hued nudes. Featured twice in *Australian Art Collector* magazine's list of Australia's 50 most collectable artists, he freely admits to having no problem with being popular: “I'm a fan of flamboyant art. I don't like to be the kind of artist whose work hides in a corner.” And he's not at all fazed by the critics who may think his children-themed works exhibit a lack of depth. “I had a very difficult childhood,” he says. “I was an outcast; I had lots of thoughts running around in my head – it was like a David Lynch movie! But I can see the beauty in an idyllic childhood, not like the one I had. I'm a very optimistic person.”

Although he's “a bit of a bowerbird” who likes to collect everything from furniture to magazines, he's not one for ostentatious possessions. Perhaps that's still a leftover from when he was “a poverty-stricken artist for a very long time”. But clearly, David's driving force is his art. “I'm not one to sit around; I'm manic and don't sleep. I think it was Noël Coward who said that work is much more fun than fun. That's how it is for me.” Yet, with a dozen projects going on at any given time, David doesn't give himself too much leeway: “I always think I'm lazy.”

To see more of David's work, visit www.davidbromley.com.au.

WHAT ARE YOU ...

COLLECTING? Russian avant-garde paintings, and modernist and Danish mid-century furniture. **LISTENING TO?** Music. I'm passionate about it. I like bluegrass and Americana. And I've just made the film clip for one of my favourite bands, The Handsome Family. **APPRECIATING?** Galleries, particularly Dianne Tanzer Gallery [(03) 9416 3956 or visit www.diannetanzergallery.net.au] and Helen Gory Galerie [(03) 9525 2808 or visit www.helengory.com]. **READING?** Biographies. I like to read about people who were style-makers at certain times. Andy Warhol, for instance. **DOING TO RELAX?** Work! Although I'm going to Byron Bay shortly, so I'm going to try to relax – or at least, I'm going to try to learn! ❖

