



BUSHTART

After years in a small London loft, artist Stefan Dunlop's family were ready for a life change. They found it in the Noosa treetops. PHOTOGRAPHER: JARED FOWLER PRODUCER: MARGIE FRASER

THIS PAGE: Stefan Dunlop's painting of Sir Edmund Hillary's 1953 Everest expedition, *Explorers 11*, anchors the double-height living room. The vintage Flos '2097' chandelier was designed by Gino Sarfatti.
OPPOSITE PAGE: a work-in-progress, *Fight*, sits in the studio next door to the house. Details, last pages.





STEFAN DUNLOP'S CANVASES pack a punch. There's an immediacy and drama to his large figurative paintings that capture a moment with blocks of bold, saturated colour. This penchant for vivid imagery seems to have inspired his new home on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

He and his wife Adrienne Webb were happily cooped up in a London garret when they surfed the Net to find a breathtaking patch of land in the Noosa hinterland, with views to the coastline and a foreground of plunging, forested gullies. It's a landscape that simply can't be ignored – deep greens, rugged slopes and thrusting gum trees. Dunlop says he finds the scenery “almost overwhelming” and, while he enjoys it as a backdrop to his studio, he is happy to leave its beauty to the landscape artists. “The green and the intensity of nature doesn't feed into my work. I take ideas from other sources,” he says. “The scale and level of ambition in historic paintings continues to fascinate me. I look at the Old Masters and try to measure up to them.”

When the couple decided to build a house and studio on the site, building prices had soared so high that Webb – who works in finance but has a keen interest in design – got a builder's licence so Dunlop and his father, a retired cabinet-maker, could build it. “We'd been living overseas for several years,” says Dunlop, “so it was an intensive time suddenly working alongside Dad. It was a good way to catch up.”

The move from a single-room warehouse flat in London's East End coincided with the couple's decision to start a family; their sons Kobe and Keanu were born during and immediately after construction of their new home. With the luxury of extra space in mind, they stepped up their bowerbird activities at the local markets and extended their collection of '60s and '70s furnishings.

“I used to love scratching about in the East End's Spitalfields and Columbia Road markets,” says Webb. “All these geezers would roll up there every Sunday with flowers and food. There was one shop I always poked my nose into and got to know the owner. She had stacks of great furniture and wonderful tea sets and other crockery.”

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OPPOSITE PAGE: a drenching in the plunge pool is as simple as jumping off the bedroom deck above it. A ladder provides access from the living room level. **ABOVE:** Dunlop's skillion-roofed studio sits below the main house and is connected by a deck and stairs. **RIGHT:** Dunlop with the arresting *Fight*.





ABOVE, LEFT: the house is designed by architects Bark Design and is elevated, like a traditional Queenslander, with ample storage underneath. **ABOVE:** raw materials, designed to weather with time, are used throughout the house. **BELOW LEFT:** sliding shoji screens above the kitchen give privacy to the main bedroom above. The dining table was designed by Dunlop's wife, Adrienne, who sourced the classic Italian chandelier from a vintage market in London. **BELOW:** the plunge pool.



THIS PAGE: two 1970s Parker Knoll wood chairs bought second-hand were lovingly restored by David Ziems from Mirror View. Webb then had the cushions re-upholstered in a pale blue Italian fabric. The 1950s G-plan coffee table was made by English furniture maker Gomme, and was unearthed at Columbia Road Market. Most of the 1950s pieces were found at Columbia Road or Spitalfields, in London's East End. The glass bowls are by Canberra designer Jonathan Baskett.



OPPOSITE PAGE: in the library, a 'Barcelona' day bed is a perfect place to read under the gaze of Dunlop's painting *Old Master Lesson 1 & 2*. **THIS PAGE, LEFT:** *Jennifer and Claire*, another work by Dunlop, sits above the bed in the guest room. **BELOW:** sliding doors retract into the walls to reveal the bedside bathroom. Dunlop's New York studio drawing hangs above a 'Barcelona' chair. Details, last pages.



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Webb had become attached to the dining table in their London loft and set about designing her own version for the house. She found some recycled blackbutt, which was folded to form a big, roomy bench and finished with wax and tung oil. Above it hangs a 1960s chandelier that Webb sourced from a second-hand shop in Spitalfields.

"The European pieces weren't in demand in London at the time, so I quickly grabbed all sorts of stuff. The loft we were living in filled with furniture until there was no room to move." They sent pictures of their treasures to their new neighbours, architects Stephen Guthrie and Lindy Atkin of Bark Design. Dunlop had been enchanted by Bark's splendid tree-house studio when he had visited his new Noosa block and met the designers.

"The pictures Stefan and Adrienne sent us of places they liked were all very 'LA on the cliff top' and fairly grand stuff," recalls Atkin. "They admire the international modernists like Eames, Neutra and van der Rohe. We scaled their house back to suit their requirements and the context, and worked to fit in all their pieces from images and descriptions."

The relationship was, in this phase, a virtual one. "We'd send over tasters of plans and they'd write notes all over them, scan them and send them back. Then we sent over a huge box of samples of finishes.

"We wanted the house to have an industrial edge," she continues. "Stefan and Adrienne were used to living in warehouse lofts. We've used raw, simple materials that will weather off in time."

The house is perched on a steep south-eastern-facing slope. Plenty of height in the undercroft allows for Dunlop's large paintings to be brought out of the skillion-roofed studio that abuts the home's verandah. "It's a bit like a Queenslander, with all the storage underneath," says Atkin. She and Guthrie worked on the idea of the house as a box for art, with a glazed side to take in the views and bring in southern light. The result is a structure less grounded than the Frank Lloyd Wrights and Neutras in the couple's scrapbook, and more akin to a platform teetering in the trees.

The house celebrates its tough environment and creates a striking shell for the furniture and artwork within, while the separate studio acts as a hideaway where Dunlop can, in his own words, "go for the jugular". MARGIE FRASER. *Stefan Dunlop exhibits at the Tim Olsen Gallery, 76 Paddington Street, Paddington NSW, (02) 9360 9854; and Fisher Galleries, 66 Parnell Road, Parnell Auckland, NZ, (+649) 377 7962; www.stefandunlop.com.*