

A work created by folding pages from a book on Australian birds is surrounded by an eclectic collection of pieces, including an optician's chart. **FACING PAGE** The living room features more of Lizzie's works, with surprising objects rising in 3D from open books, like the hot-air balloon emerging from an atlas in *Untethered*.



CHANGE THE FRAME

SWAPPING BIG CITIES FOR A COASTAL HAMLET MADE SENSE FOR LIZZIE BUCKMASTER DOVE AND HER FAMILY — AND SPACE FOR THIS ARTIST TO WORK.

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BELOW Delicate scalpel work as Lizzie prepares cut-outs: "I have a really steady hand, but I can't go out and have two coffees in the morning — I've made that mistake! One coffee is fine..." RIGHT Lizzie with Wilkie (left) and Max. FACING PAGE Marita Fraser's *Love of Diagrams (Test 2)* hangs in the downstairs living area.



"SPACE, A BETTER LIFESTYLE, THE OUTDOORS..."

TO REACH THE small coastal village of Coledale, about an hours drive south of Sydney, you have to pass over the Illawarra escarpment. The road is steep and narrow and snakes down through thick-trunked gums. Treetops meet overhead, creating cool, shady glades and the soft cadence of running streams dances in the air.

The ocean bursts into view at Stanwell Park, as does a view of the narrow plateau that runs beside the sea south to Wollongong. An undulating mantle of forest meets crescents of biscuit-coloured sand, forming a ragged line like the scalloped edge of a crochet rug. Breathtaking is the only word.

Which makes it easy to see why Mike Dove and Lizzie Buckmaster Dove chose to trade in their life in a frenetic metropolis. Here the landscape shapes the days to a slow and measured rhythm for Lizzie and Mike, and their children Max, 5, and Wilkie, 2. After nine years in London and Barcelona, and a short stint in Sydney, they've now come to rest in a place where the footwear of choice is bare feet and the beach is a mere stone's throw away.

Trees and bushes mark each boundary, and more have been planted, so that in years to come it will be even more

private. A soft carpet of grass leads to the front steps and the wide-open front door.

Newly built when Lizzie and Michael bought it in June 2007, the house is so spacious and open that one thinks, incongruously, of a dance hall.

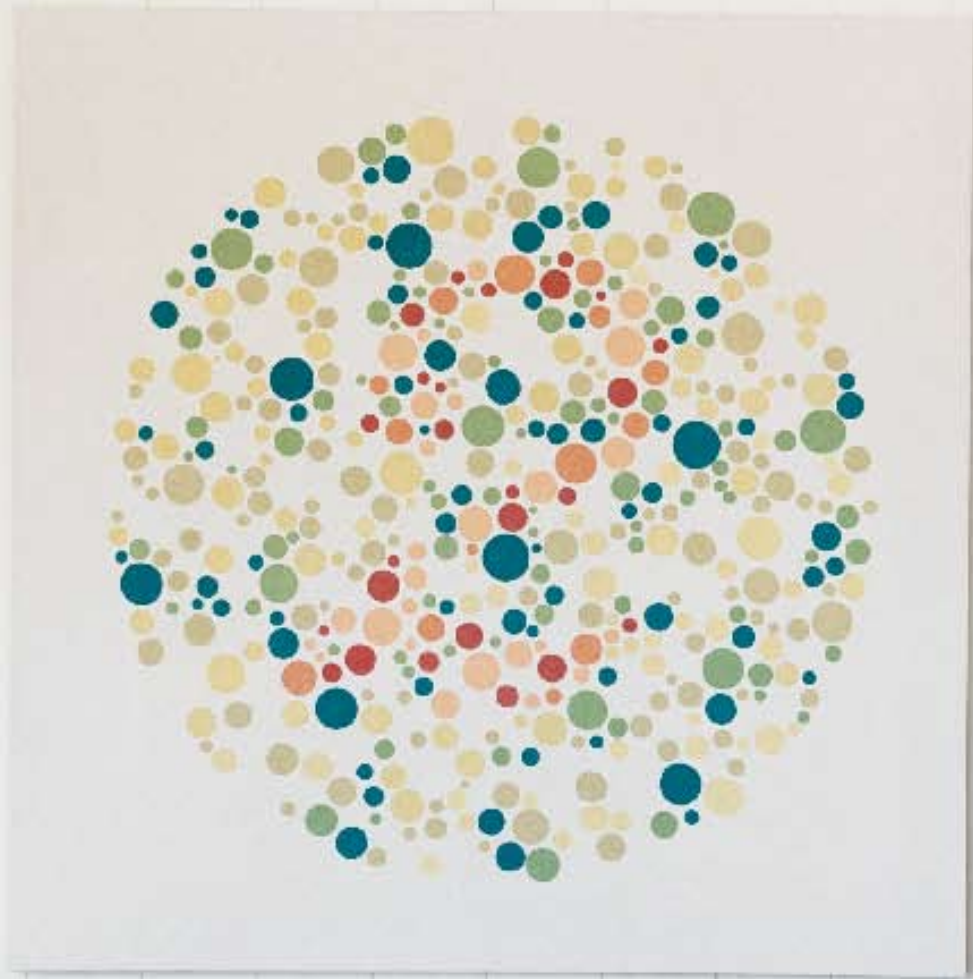
"It's delicious!" says Lizzie, who relishes the space, the view — and the rare quiet moment.

There's one large room on each of the two levels — a combined kitchen, living and dining room downstairs and the main bedroom above. These spaces are so large that it's almost a shock to step beyond them into the boys' bedroom, a guest room and the television room — areas that are contained by traditional walls and doors that close.

"This is the house we came back for," Lizzie says. "It's what we wanted — space, a better lifestyle, the outdoors... all those things that Australia embodies."

For Mike, more space means everything they love can be on show — "Otherwise, it wouldn't see the light of day."

When they first met, Mike, a town planner, was living in New Zealand while Lizzie, an artist, dwelt in Sydney. "We had a trans-Tasman relationship for a year, then had to decide on a city in which we could live together," >







ABOVE Lizzie's intricate paper works have pride of place on the bookshelf. The boxed bird is her very first cut-out, while the cubes on the middle shelf are among her latest. FACING PAGE Mike bought these Danish dining chairs at a closing-down sale in Sydney for \$150. Above them hangs some inspired whimsy — planning to mount some unused cups on the wall, to mirror Marita Fraser's painting, Lizzie suspended them from the ceiling instead.





"I STILL CAN'T SLEEP THROUGH DAWN BECAUSE THE BIRDS ARE SO LOUD!"





Lizzie says. “We thought that would be Melbourne or Wellington, but it turned out to be London. We bought our first place there and that’s when we started buying furniture and art. Mike and I have really different tastes, but we’ve found a taste that we share.”

It’s a look that is based on simple, streamlined shapes and muted, neutral colours. Much of the furniture, like the lime green Eames chairs in the kitchen, and the light fittings in the stairwell, was bought second-hand.

However, the most striking decorative element is the art collection. Paintings and photographs — solo and grouped — feature on every wall. Some Mike has had for years, others were purchased in London; a few are by friends. And many are by Lizzie.

Some of her early pieces are propped on the shelves of the bookcase in the living room, an apt spot since they involved cutting shapes through the pages of books. There’s a hot-air balloon floating from the pages of the *Reader’s Digest Great World Atlas* and a tree grows out of *Garden Trees and Shrubs in Australia* by Harold Sargeant.

“I call it three-dimensional paper construction,” Lizzie says. “Cutting through the books and making them three-dimensional satisfies the urge — when you have a book that’s just so beautiful — to look at every page at once. You want to absorb it.”

In preparation for an upcoming show Lizzie has been making delicate cubes from pages taken from books about Australian birds, and cutting and mounting complex wallpaper patterns from native plant posters. Birds also feature in her most recent series, in which pages are rolled into cylinders that create a picture. The work is delicate and intimate; the images seem to flutter before your eyes. For Lizzie, the work is about her return to Australia and seeing it through new eyes.

“I’m thinking about the first settlers and how the country must have seemed to them,” she says. “It’s so different from England. The flora and fauna are so aggressive — I still can’t sleep through dawn because the birds are so loud!”

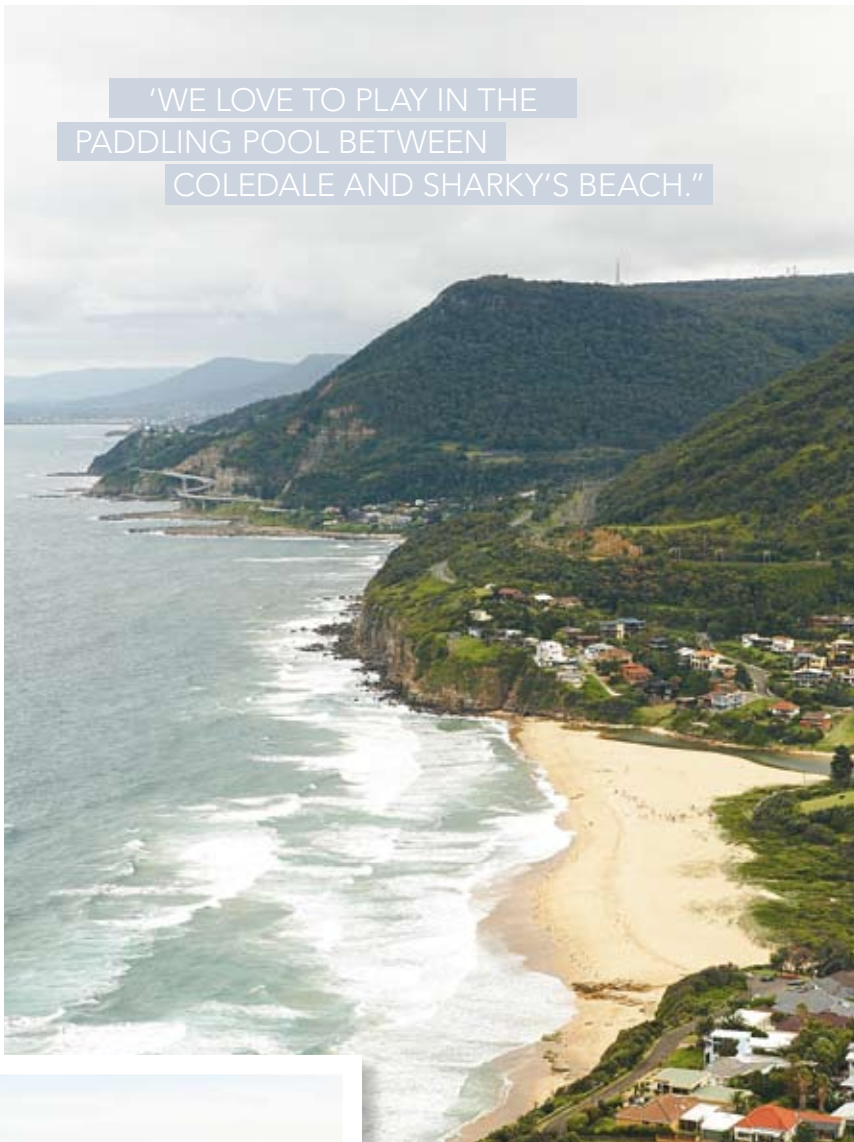
Mike, who hasn’t lived in Australia before, is seeing all this for the first time and has been profoundly affected by the move to Coledale. “I love how the spatial boundaries appear infinite,” he says. “I adore the intensity of colour, the obnoxious noises of nature, and the climate — and I find the visual and spiritual power of the escarpment overpowering.”

In May, Lizzie’s next show, Into The Woods, will be at NG Art Gallery, 3 Little Queen Street, Chippendale, Sydney NSW. (02) 9318 2992; www.ngart.com.au

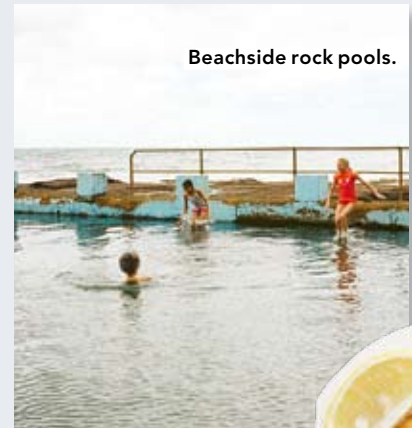


TOP ROW, FROM LEFT The master bedroom; balloons and butterflies float from a wall; Max and Wilkie launch themselves towards the mobiles and Chinese lanterns. BOTTOM ROW, FROM LEFT Action meets leisure on the verandah; second-hand Eames chairs teamed with leather chairs bought in Barcelona under Alison Jones’s *Train Series*; gumboots stay downstairs.

'WE LOVE TO PLAY IN THE PADDLING POOL BETWEEN COLEDALE AND SHARKY'S BEACH.'



Coledale was originally 'Coaldale', named after the great seam of coal that runs along the Illawarra escarpment south of Sydney. The hamlet is wedged between the sheer cliff face and the Pacific Ocean. One of a string of mining villages that dot the coastline, from Coalcliff in the north to Bulli in the south, the settlement was laid out and allotments sold after a mine was opened in 1903. The mine closed in 1926, but many of the miners' cottages in these small coastal villages remain intact, lending the area a timeless quality.



Beachside rock pools.



Fresh from Flanagan's.

FLANAGAN'S FISH CAFE
190 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul

Wednesday–Sunday, noon–8pm

"We always get the salt-and-pepper squid," Lizzie says.

HANG GLIDING
Bald Hill, Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Stanwell Park

The steep escarpment cliff of Bald Hill is a prime spot for hang gliding. "We like seeing them land in the basin below. There's a playground there with a bike track."

ROCK POOLS

"We love to play in the paddling pool between Coledale and Sharky's Beach. If I'm lucky, I can get some laps in too. We all love looking for anemones on the rock platform and swimming at another natural rock pool, at the north end of Little Austinmer Beach."

ROYAL NATIONAL PARK, Sutherland

"Going for short walks in the Royal National Park is special — there is so much to see and talk about."

345 BISTRO
345 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul

Open from 8.30am Wednesday–Sunday; dinner Wednesday–Saturday

"The bistro is right next to the station and a garden, and they have a couple of ride-on cars, so the boys are entertained and so are we. They do wonderful coffee, babyccinos and evening meals."

WOMBARRA SCULPTURE GARDEN

57 Morrison Avenue, Wombarra

First full weekend of month, 10am–4pm

More than 30 sculptures, from small to large, are dotted throughout this rainforest garden. "They are only open



ABOVE Lizzie and the boys stroll the shoreline. RIGHT Tempting spreads from 345 Bistro. FAR RIGHT Flanagan's.

