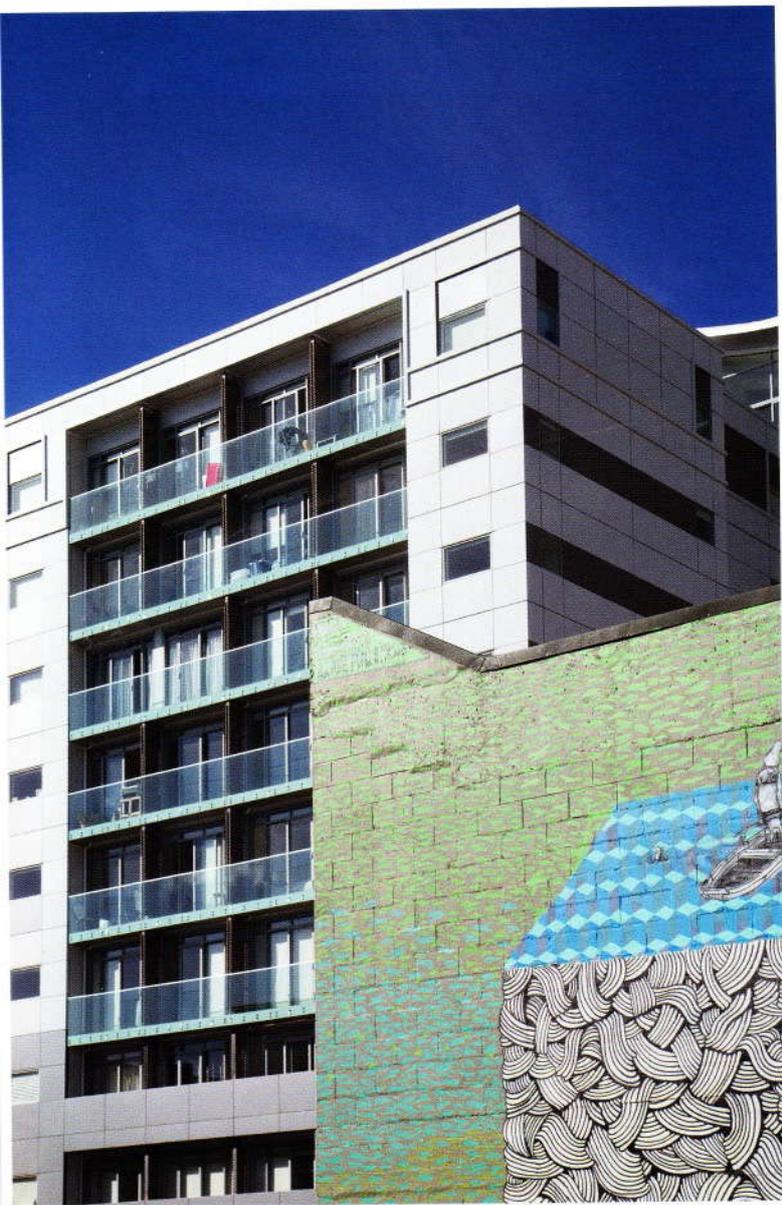




Inside Story

Meet Martin Brown, Wellington shopkeeper and apartment dweller.

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“ I F I WOULDN'T have it in my home, then I wouldn't have it in my store,” says Martin Brown. The store he's referring to is Brown & Co, an interiors cornucopia that was name-checked by *Vogue* Australia in September 2014 as one of Wellington's hottest spots. Opened in 2012, it features a mash-up of mid-century furniture, taxidermy, luxury pieces from Chanel and Maison Martin Margiela, as well as artwork by Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin. It's where Brown spends his time if he's not in his apartment in downtown Wellington or at his 1970's bach on the seafront at Te Horo on the Kapiti Coast.

“I'm living somewhat of a schizophrenic existence,” admits Brown, 46. “My main residence is the bach but I spend two or three nights a week at the apartment, which is five minutes from the store.”

Brown has rented the north-facing, sixth-floor apartment for a year and says the arrangement works well while he looks for “the perfect apartment” to buy: “I'm not tied to this apartment and nor do I love it aesthetically but the lock-up-and-leave aspect is appealing, as is the fact that it's close to my two favourite restaurants, Floriditas and Capitol. After the

tranquillity of the beach, it's also nice to have city noise. Plus, my building is in the shadow of a strip club, so it makes for some interesting sights!”

Born in Auckland, Brown began his career in fashion retailing, then went on to co-own local clothing labels Crane Brothers, Little Brother and Gubb & Mackie. Moving to Wellington 16 years ago, he realised an empty space in Wakefield Street was the perfect spot to recreate the kind of stores he'd visited in New York.

“Places such as *White Trash* in the East Village and *Open Air Modern* in Williamsburg had Victorian taxidermy next to a mid-century Hans Wegner leather sofa and you could buy an anatomy skull to go with your vintage Hermes ashtray,” explains Brown, who heads to the US and Europe on buying trips twice a year.

“I have the best of both worlds with the bach and the city dwelling,” he says. “Because this apartment's so small, I limit the number of pieces from the store that find their way here. I also have art sitting on the floor or on stacks of magazines because you can't put holes in walls of rentals but, in some ways, it makes the art more real and accessible.”

Previous page. Martin Brown outside his Wellington flat.

Above, clockwise from left. Brown's inner-city apartment building; a taxidermy budge; Brown in his home; the bedroom is filled with books and art.



Martin Brown's Favourite Things

1 Set of taxidermied ravens
 "A lot of the store's taxidermy is the result of pest control and these beauties came from a cull in Western Australia."

2 Meccano Empire State Building
 "Some classics never age and, around 10 years ago, Meccano released its special-edition building collection, including the Empire State Building. Being a frequent visitor to New York for buying trips, this is a favourite."

3 Herman Miller spinning tops
 "This limited-edition collection of walnut spinning tops was inspired by Charles and Ray Eames' philosophy of serious pleasure. Although essentially a classic children's toy, they're beautifully crafted."

4 The Magnificent Seven by Damien Hirst
 "This work was created to coincide with Hirst's exhibition *Theories, Models, Methods, Approaches, Assumptions, Results, and Findings* in New York in 2000. While I don't fully understand the connection between the ping pong balls and the exhibition, I find it appealing."

5 Rainbow Servant Dreaming by Michael Parekowhai
 "I have a number of Michael's works but the piece that I refer to as the Grey Man perfectly encapsulates his practice. It's a simple yet engaging work, perfectly executed."

6 Stafford Allpress' The Ballot Box
 "Stafford Allpress crafts miniature household objects and environments with incredible precision from raw materials. This work was a finalist in the 2009 Wallace Art Awards; fortunately the Wallace Trust didn't acquire it, so I did!"

7 Sixteen Self Portrait by Tracey Emin
 "This limited-edition photo was released in conjunction with her book, *Tracey Emin My Photo Album*, and shows Tracey as a precocious, confident 16-year-old. I've always been drawn to the rawness, vulnerability and sometimes humiliating aspects of her work."

8 Tom Ford travel bag
 "This oversized bag is pure luxury. It cost me a bomb but I couldn't resist it; for me, a trip begins when packing."

9 Hermès Voyage cologne and skincare
 "I was at one of my favourite department stores, Le Bon Marché in Paris, when I discovered Hermès Voyage. The design of the bottle is not only beautiful it's also refillable."

10 Kate Sylvester Douglas and Bec folding stools
 "These were a Christmas gift a few years ago from a close friend and I use two as bedside tables. I love the simplicity and the contrast of the tan leather against the brass." ☺

