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AT HOME WITH **Arlene
DICKINSON**

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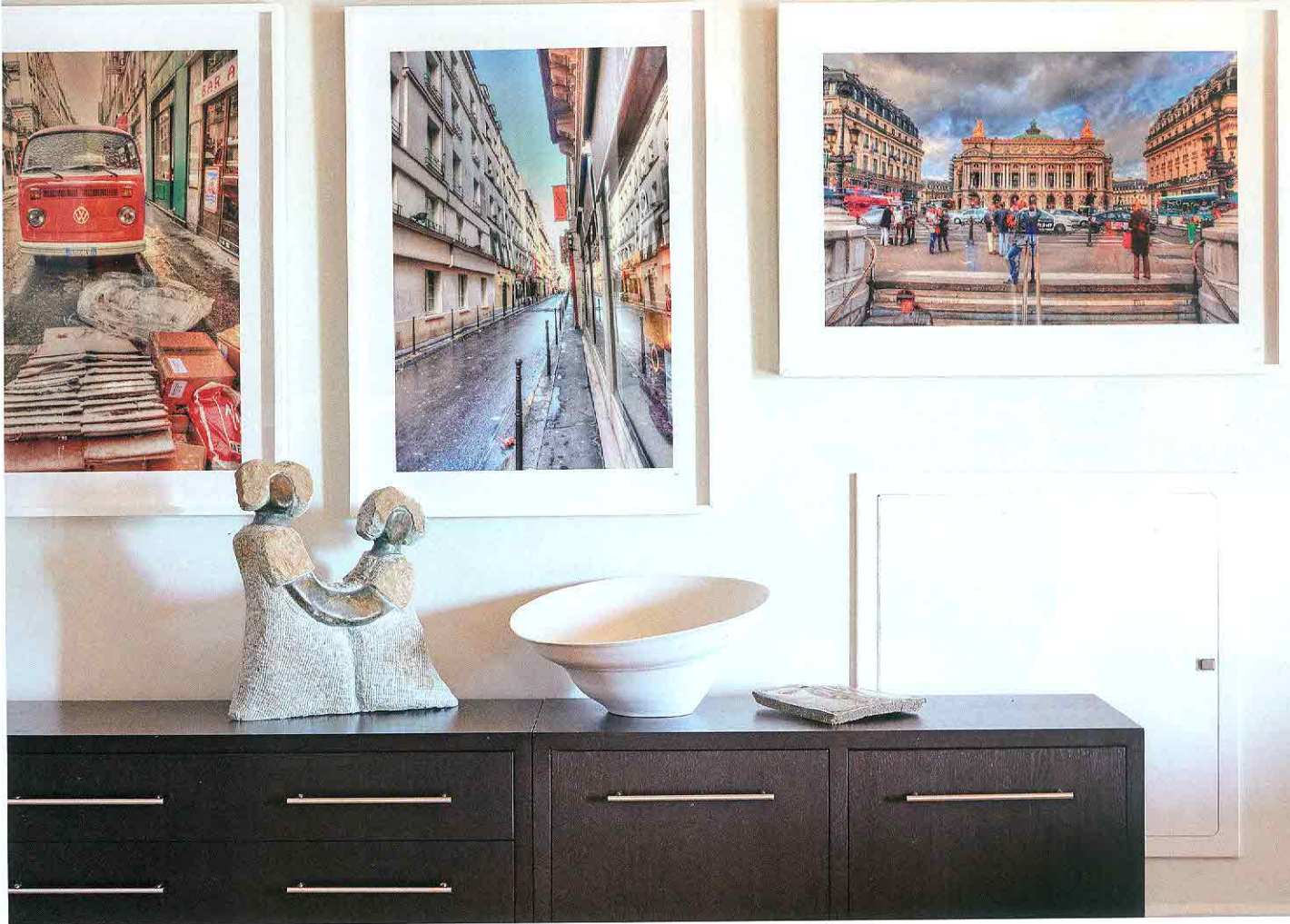
THE SUMMER ISSUE



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Arlene collects art with personal meaning. Vibrant photographs by her daughter Marayna of Paris street scenes grace a wall in the hallway, while Arlene's dining room features a resin "bum" chair by Toronto's Snob store owner, fellow South African Denise Zidel. It's one of the many idiosyncratic pieces Arlene has collected over the years.

The 1915 building, clad in red brick and trimmed with stone, is the former home of the Butterick Publishing Company. In 2001, it was converted into 10 lofts with enormous windows, exposed brick walls, 14-foot-high wood-beamed ceilings, expansive hardwood floors, tin ceilings in the bathrooms and, perhaps most important to the residents, private elevators running up the middle of the building.

Arlene's 5,000-square-foot, 10-room loft has a distinctly Manhattan-SoHo vibe, with its warm, whimsical, eclectic mix of art and furniture, all laden with personal meaning. It feels large, spacious and totally open.

Despite the open concept, there is a particular room in which the executive, who joined the cast of *Dragons' Den* in its second season in 2007, likes to enjoy private time. The living room, with its working fireplace and floor-to-ceiling glass doors, is her favourite place. "I spend all of my time in there because it's really bright, facing the lake," she says. "I have my office there, I listen to music, read and entertain. It's a great space with these little areas that are quite homey where I like to curl up and read."

The loft is also a showcase for Arlene's whimsical tastes—which are evident in some of the most unlikely places—such as the pair of black "bum" chairs made of resin, which flank the dining table and add a note of humour to the more formal Italian bucket seating. Or the table itself, topped by an old Goodyear advertising billboard built onto old shelving, just one of Arlene's many finds from her visits to some of Toronto's quirky shops. ☞





Arlene retained many of the architectural elements in the loft, from the weathered wood ceilings to the original hardwood floors that run throughout the 5,000-square-foot space. She added custom cabinetry to house her appliances as well as her wine collection, which features many bottles from her own Persuasion wine line. Offsetting the subdued wood are splashes of bright colour, including vibrant African dolls.

Her love of the offbeat is matched only by her love of objects with personal meaning. The Den mother has surrounded herself with reminders of family and her early childhood in South Africa. The hall table with its horn base, the orange headdress hanging on the wall, the groupings of African dolls, and the antelope tusks all come from various African countries. She bought many at Snob, a shop owned by fellow South African expat Denise Zidel who, like Arlene, favours artifacts from Senegal, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya and Morocco.

The side table has special meaning for Arlene: in the shape of Africa, it's a wedding present given to her parents, who brought her and her two sisters to Canada in search of a better life. The vibrant photography lining one of the walls reflects time that she spent travelling in Paris with her daughter Marayna, a photographer.

She loves to surround herself with bright colours. "I hate the brown and white you see in so many lofts," she says. From the giant painting of a child jumping to the sculpture of a sheep covered in brightly embroidered flowers, 