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ART IS PERSONAL. SOME PREFER CONTEMPORARY ART OR TRADITIONAL ART, while others favor an eclectic mix. Some develop a passion for a particular medium or artist and collect in great depth. Brooke and Will McDaniel are one young Raleigh couple who have decided to fill their lives – and the home they share with two young daughters – with contemporary art by emerging artists.

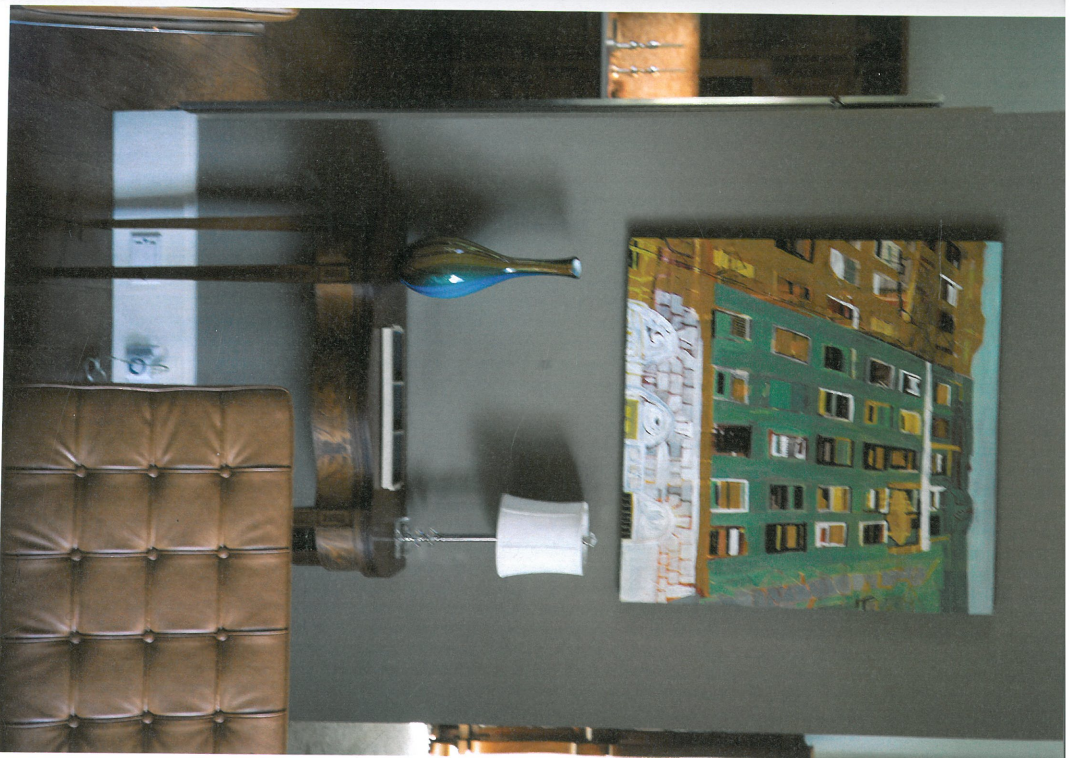
“We love to surround ourselves with interesting and engaging art,” says Brooke, 34, and one look around the striking contemporary home she and her husband Will, 40, built in an old Raleigh neighborhood near North Hills in 2008 confirms that. “It keeps our daily lives visually stimulating and gives our girls the opportunity to interact with art every day.”

Over the past few years, Brooke and Will have acquired artwork with both restraint and boldness, resulting in a collection of local and national artists that reflects their sophisticated modern aesthetic.

A designer born in Salisbury, N.C., Brooke has an art history degree from Duke University and a master’s in architecture from N.C. State. Will, a dentist and Raleigh native, says art and architecture became important to him after taking an art history class at Davidson College.

“I thought that art collecting would not be possible at this stage in our lives,” he says, “but I realized that we didn’t have to buy a Picasso to begin collecting.”

The McDaniels’ first art purchase was *Southern States* by Raleigh artist Shaun Richards (shown above, left). The



piece is still one of their favorite works of art, and an instant conversation piece.

"Having a large scale piece in the dining room is captivating," Brooke says. "At dinner parties, there is almost always a conversation about the art and lots of meaningful discussion around it." The collage in the painting includes pages of Ayn Rand's book, *Atlas Shrugged*. "It's so unexpected," Brooke says. "People are instantly engaged." A group of paintings from the *Women and Children First* series by the same artist hangs at the bottom of the stairs (opposite, right).

The McDaniels' collection also includes mixed media, photography, paintings and ceramics by regional and national artists including Scott Upton, Megan Cump, Nancy Baker, Sharon Dowell, Ali Sobel-Read, Holly Brewster-Jones, Murray Handler and others. Sharon Beth Dowell's *Morning in Soho* brightens the living area (above, left); ceramic tiles by Ali Sobel-Read punctuate a wall near the piano (above, right); and Richards' *The Bachelorette* transforms the master bedroom (left).



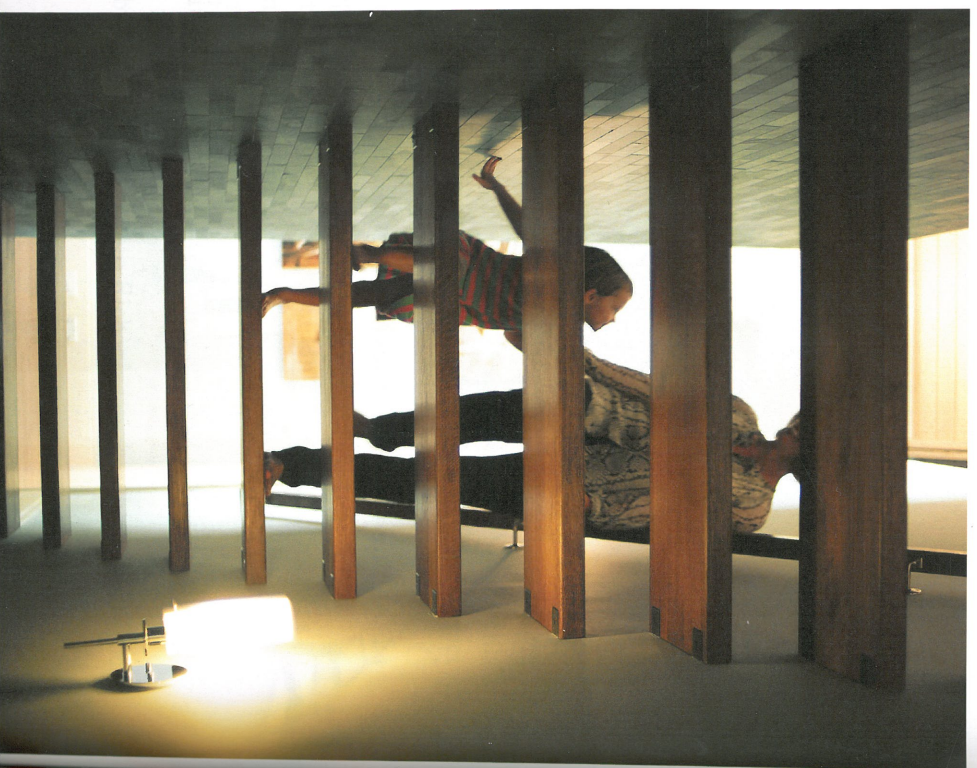


The couple hopes to expand their collection to include outdoor sculpture and different media from established artists.

"We have met some of the artists we collect, and follow their careers," Brooks says, and in some cases, the couple has developed real friendships with those whose art they love. The explosion of the art scene in Raleigh over the last 10 to 12 years has fostered the McDaniels' interest and been "amazing to see," Brooke says. "No matter what level of knowledge you may have about art or collecting art, there is always something new and exciting to find in this city."

The McDaniels have taken a concrete wall that is not visible from the street and have turned it into their own graffiti art project, above. "My friend Chad Smith recommended a book about Banksy, the famous British graffiti artist," Will says. "I was inspired. I figured I could try my hand at street art. If it didn't work out, I could paint over it. Brooke and I try not to take ourselves too seriously, and the kids love it!" At their next dinner party, Will says he might ask guests to sign their names and "create their own graffiti tag."

The McDaniels have two daughters, Grace, 6, and Bridget, 3. "Our girls are always encouraged to explore art in the world around them," Brooke says. "Whether it is sidewalk chalk on the back deck, or taking an art lesson with friends."



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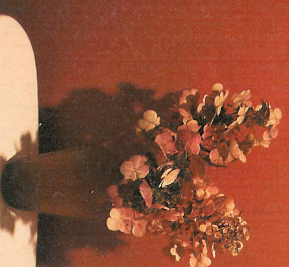
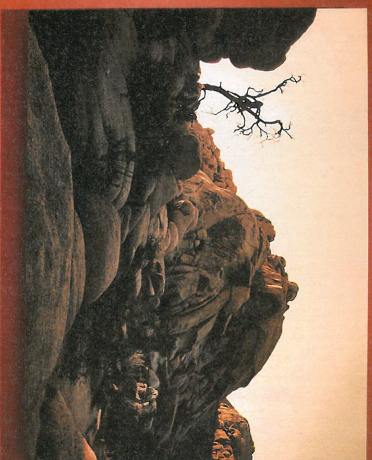


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The Megan Cump photograph in the powder room, above, is a surprise for guests. "Buy what you love," Brooke says. "You may have to find a place for it, but a room can be designed around the art or the other way around."

"We have worked hard to mix styles, textures, and color," Brooke says. "It has been fun to pair family heirloom pieces (like the clock, above) with new ones that we love."