

THE ARTIST'S WAY

Over wine and cheese, Home Weekly chats to outspoken portrait painter Reshada Crouse about curating, living in her remarkable, museum-like Yeoville home and being perpetually unfashionable

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ALL THE ITEMS IN RESHADA'S HOME ARE INTENSELY PERSONAL AND ARTFULLY PLACED.



RESHADA CROUSE AT HER EASEL.



THE BRIGHT, ECLECTICALLY FURNISHED LIVING ROOM.

RESHADA Crouse is one of South Africa's most prominent portrait painters. She has painted mayors, Reserve Bank governors, generals and chancellors, and her enchanting Yeoville home is wallpapered floor-to-ceiling with the paintings she loves most: of her children, her mother and her dearest friends.

It's like a museum; the walls are not there as places to hang the art — it feels more as if the paintings are there to hold up the walls, the ceilings and the roof.

Says Reshada: "This house was a house where I raised children. I need to change I suppose . . . but I like it here. When I travel to Europe to look at paintings, I'm so glad that I live in a little art museum."

I ask Reshada where she'd go if she moved; where would she put all her things? She laughs about learning to be alone, "experimenting with solitude". As a painter she's accustomed to "amusing herself" and enjoying her privacy when she paints.

She imagines a giant studio with only a bed. "I don't think I even want a house any more." Perhaps you'd have to sell all your paintings, I suggest.

"You don't have anyone else's paintings here?" I ask.

"No. I don't like that look. I think if I were to start collecting I would have none of my work with the other pictures. I can't mix other people's paintings with mine."

I look around the rooms. "Besides paintings, you have all manner of bits and pieces. Over here are trophies: are they real trophies?"

"They're plastic! They're Gabriel's, my son's."

"This is the thing that's interesting for me about your house. If you go to a hipster's house — you know what a hipster is? (Reshada laughs loudly at this) — it might look similar to your house except everything was bought at a thrift shop; trophies for other children's achievements."

She roars with laughter now. "So maybe I should try and become a hipster."

"What I'm pointing to is that there's something very un-curated about your home."

"I agree with what you're saying about this house not being curated. You know what annoys me," she says as she goes off in search of more wine. "When I was studying in London, at the National Gallery they had



MORE PORTRAITS IN THE GUEST ROOM.

“I think that fashion in terms of decorating your house is . . . disgusting. I love fashion, but in the right place. I do not adore seeing the processed-cheese look in a living space. If you cannot make up your own story in your own house – who are you then?”

a thing called ‘The Eye of The Artist’. They’d get an important painter, and he could put together in a room his favourite paintings from the National Gallery and hang them in a funny way.

But they didn’t even call it curating. They just said ‘David Hockney has arranged . . .’

“So it has a lot to do with fashion?”

“I don’t like fashion, I don’t like conformity. Fashion is great on the catwalk. A fashion show is a wonderful thing. But I don’t think fashion in art is good; it nauseates me, it repulses me.

“And I think that fashion in terms of decorating your house is equally disgusting. I love fashion, but in the right place. When I’m at Fashion Week I adore every one of them. But I do not adore seeing the processed-cheese look in a living space. If you cannot make up your own story in your own house – who are you then?”

“Did your art ever get caught up in fashion?”

“You know, I have had the most spectacular career of being unfashionable from start to finish. I went from shallow unfashionable to profoundly deep unfashionable. And there I have remained. But Lucien Freud gives us hope; he was just a simple painter.”



A STILL LIFE IN THE MAIN BEDROOM.



YET MORE PAINTINGS ON THE WALL OF THE ENTRANCE HALL.



VINTAGE FURNITURE AND ACCESSORIES IN THE SUNNY DINING ROOM.