

# HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

A VISIT TO AN ARTIST'S HOME IN NSW'S BATHURST  
INSPIRED BLOGGER AND STYLIST PIA JANE BIJKERK  
TO EXPLORE THE TRUE MEANING OF HOME.

WORDS AND STYLING PIA JANE BIJKERK  
PHOTOGRAPHY SHARYN CAIRNS



Art books in the library and  
a mixed media piece by Greg  
Hyde called *Girl In WIRES*.  
FACING PAGE Gum trees  
(*Eucalyptus viminalis*), planted  
in the 1980s, line the drive.



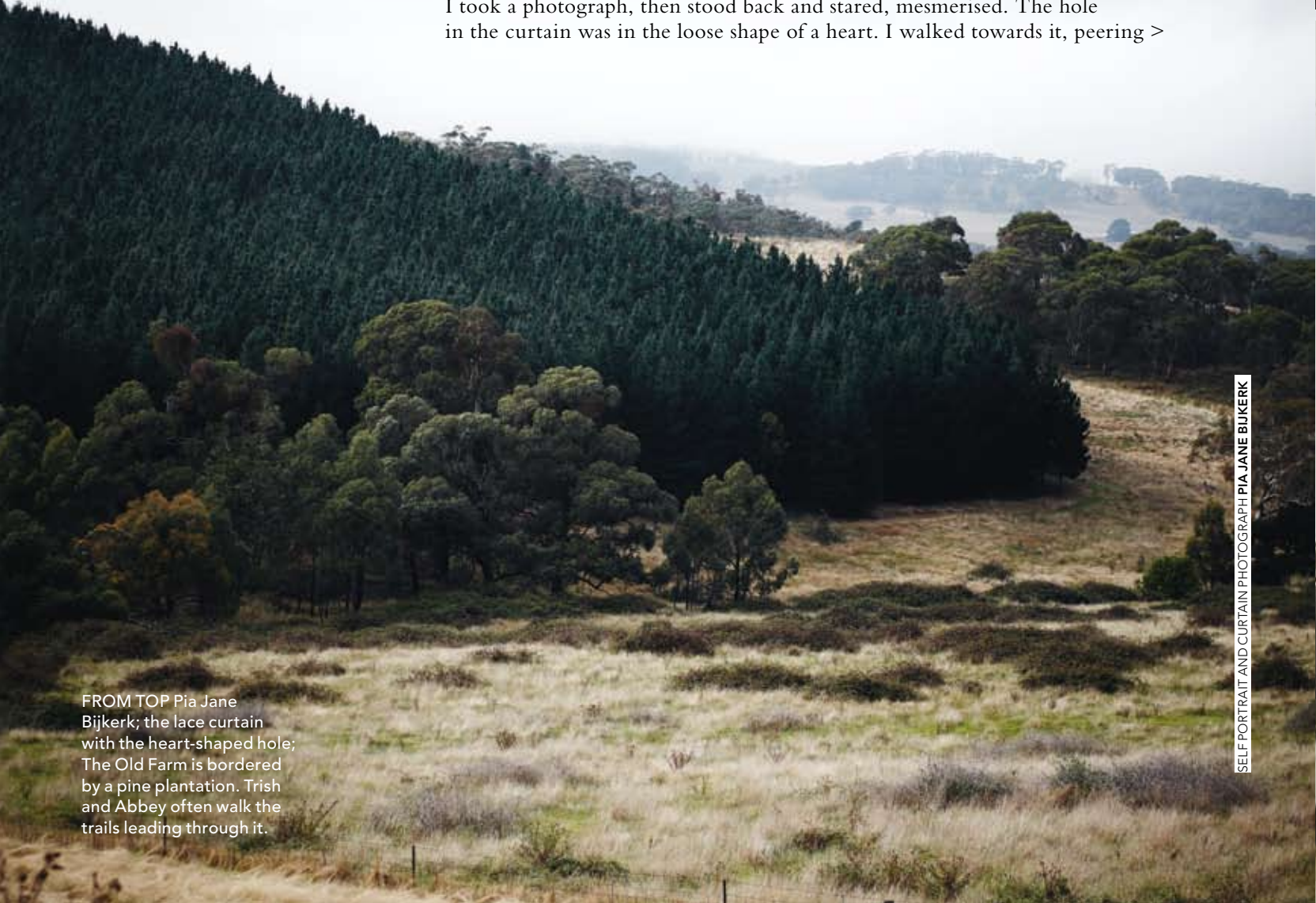


**ONE EARLY SPRING** morning five years ago I drove the three-hour scenic route from Sydney to a small town called Meadow Flat nestled on the outskirts of the Winburndale Nature Reserve, just outside Bathurst. My destination was the home of artist Greg Hyde, whose artworks of whimsical, colourful creatures, carefully composed and illustrated, are visual poems, full of magic and meaning. The detail in each work drew me in and captured my imagination. On this particular trip, I would photograph Greg's art and studio, along with the home that he shares with his wife Trish, and the surrounding property, which they call The Old Farm.

On that drive, as I meandered through the Blue Mountains, watching the morning fog gradually lift to reveal masses of dew-laden ferns and eucalyptus trees, I was giddy with anticipation at what the day might bring. Not only would I be far away from the busy city, surrounded by nature and quietness, but I would also have the chance to capture the home of this Australian artist that I so greatly admired, and gain insight into his life and inspirations.

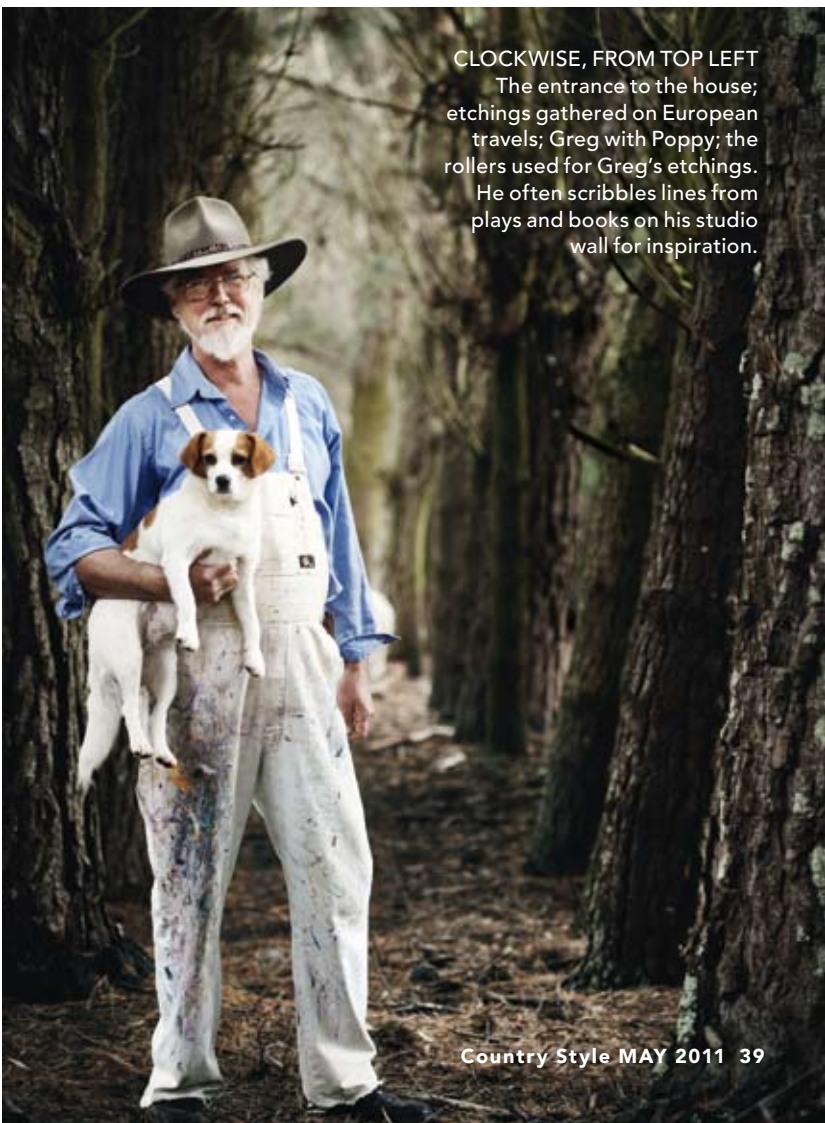
I got much more than I bargained for.

While I spent the day photographing Greg's home and studio, enjoying cups of tea with him at the kitchen table, pondering life and talking art, I gained insights into his world, but also into my own. Was it the lure of country living that pulled at my heart? I couldn't be sure. But something was stirring as I wandered about the farm. I found a beautifully aged lace curtain hanging ethereal and silent in front of a small wood-framed window in the upstairs landing of the house. There was a tiny tear in the bottom left corner of the curtain, the light spilling through it illuminated the otherwise dark space. I took a photograph, then stood back and stared, mesmerised. The hole in the curtain was in the loose shape of a heart. I walked towards it, peering >



FROM TOP Pia Jane Bijkerk; the lace curtain with the heart-shaped hole; The Old Farm is bordered by a pine plantation. Trish and Abbey often walk the trails leading through it.

SELF PORTRAIT AND CURTAIN PHOTOGRAPH PIA JANE BIJKERK



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT  
The entrance to the house; etchings gathered on European travels; Greg with Poppy; the rollers used for Greg's etchings. He often scribbles lines from plays and books on his studio wall for inspiration.



A heavy gilt frame surrounds an oil painting of a boat by Greg. FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Greg often depicts native wildlife; Trish and Greg; paints, pens and pastels; *The Gully*, Greg's painting of bush in the NSW Blue Mountains, hangs in a sitting room.



through the heart-shaped hole to the garden below. Later, as I wandered around the property, I began to see more details. Small hand-fashioned hearts hung in the tree branches, made visible by the shards of afternoon sunlight flickering through the trees and bouncing off their metal surfaces. Shadows and light danced on the paved stone terrace, little heart shapes among them. This home, made by hand from mud bricks and salvaged antique fixtures, was so obviously filled with 'heart'. I drove away late in the afternoon, more enthusiastic and energised than when I arrived.

Less than a year later I packed a small suitcase and headed to France. It was this special outing to Greg and Trish's country home that had prompted me to follow my heart across the seas, explore the concept of 'home', and to write about the journey.

A few months ago I moved back to Sydney after four years in Europe. My book, *My Heart Wanders*, has just been published by Murdoch Books. The other day, I drove back to The Old Farm to visit Greg and Trish, give them a copy of the book and find out a little more about how they came to be living in Meadow Flat.

"The farm has always been more than just a house," says Trish.

In 1976, Trish was offered a job in Greece on an archeological dig. She convinced her new husband Greg to pack up their belongings, leave their terrace in North Sydney and head to the Peloponnese peninsula with their 10-month-old daughter, Abbey. But after 14 months they realised life on an archeological dig wasn't feasible with a baby and moved to Henley, in the English countryside, where they lived for four months.

When Trish became pregnant with their second daughter, Annastasia, they were filled with a deep longing for their own land. The couple decided to return home.

A year and a half later, Trish and Greg bought The Old Farm — a 15-hectare property in Meadow Flat. The couple built their home from mud bricks made on >



"A HOME IS LIKE A SCULPTURE," GREG SAYS.  
"WE STRUGGLED, SUFFERED, SWORE AND  
LOVED OUR WAY THROUGH IT."





CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Greg listens to music as he works; the door to The Long Barn is decorated with farm tools, including old rifles and a wool paddle; works in progress; Trish and Greg's bedroom. FACING PAGE Curious residents.



the farm by Greg and local builder Terry Muldoon. "A home is like a sculpture," Greg says. "We struggled, suffered, swore and loved our way through it."

That was more than 30 years ago. Greg and Trish are now both 60, and their daughters, 36-year-old Abbey and 34-year-old Tass, are married with young children of their own. With infectious enthusiasm Greg talks of the solitude of farm life and the joy it has brought the family. "Getting on the tractor, cutting wood for winter, or gardening in between painting, framing and etching... even though there is never enough time, it's so satisfying and pleasantly tiring," he says.

Beyond the mud-brick dwelling that faces north and overlooks soft hills and dense forest, there's a large vegetable garden, a chicken coop and the guest quarters that they call The Long Barn. Another barn houses Greg's studio, framing workshop and gallery. There's also an immaculate croquet lawn — and 52 sheep that call The Old Farm home.

Greg's art reflects the harmony of the land, with many of his etchings featuring native wildlife. His vibrant and often humorous works are sold all over the world; he has staged solo and group exhibitions throughout Australia, and had pieces hung in both the Wynne and Archibald Prize exhibitions.

Greg and Trish both enjoy the community of locals and weekenders who are a *mélange* of farmers, lecturers from Charles Sturt University, miners, writers and painters. There is always someone calling in for a coffee, whether it's painter friends dropping by

on their way to and from Sydney, or a neighbour wanting to catch up on family news.

A few years ago Abbey was having surgery and while waiting for the anaesthetic to take effect, the surgeon posed a question: "Where's your favourite place?" Abbey replied "The Old Farm". Soon after, she and her husband Nicholas sold their house in Sydney, left their full-time jobs and moved to The Old Farm to raise their two young boys, Will, now seven, and Milo, five. Abbey and Nicholas live in the main house with the boys, while Greg and Trish have moved into The Long Barn.

"The main house is designed for a family, it really is a lovely home for kids," Greg says. "We're about 100 metres apart, so we give each other some privacy. It's worked out really happily."

Greg and Trish are thrilled to see the property in full use once again. The vegetable garden is flourishing, Abbey has given the interior of the main house a fresh lick of paint, and Will and Milo — "two little would-be David Attenboroughs" as Trish says — love looking for frogs, toads, and lizards.

"Mum and Dad's home has always been open, warm and welcoming," reflects Abbey. "Although the occupants have changed a little, I think the dream of The Old Farm is still very much alive." Dogs Poppy and Finnegan play on the driveway while Greg works on his latest painting and Trish helps Abbey look after the boys. Yes, The Old Farm is still very much alive. \*

*For information about Pia's work, visit [blog.piajanebijkerk.com](http://blog.piajanebijkerk.com). For Greg Hyde, telephone (02) 6359 5270 or visit [www.greghyde.com.au](http://www.greghyde.com.au)*

