

Harper's BAZAR

LIVING SPECIAL

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Simone Brewster

Luke Edward Hall



Artists in RESIDENCE

Gary Hume and Georgie Hopton
at home in Bloomsbury



Georgie Hopton and Gary Hume in the living-room, with (from left) Hume's 'Chalk Mirror' (2018) and 'Heimspiel (Ball)' (1999) by Thomas Grünfeld displayed behind them



Clockwise from left: the living-room, with Hume's 'Rose and Leaves' above the fireplace and Hopton's 'Heathcliffe' (2012) to the right. The small library area on the mezzanine floor, featuring a stained-glass window inspired by Hume's artwork 'Yellow Window' (2002). 'Untitled' (2012) by Andreas Schulze



Bloomsbury SET

Gary Hume and Georgie Hopton's townhouse is filled with treasured finds, works by friends and the couple's own creations

BY FRANCES HEDGES PHOTOGRAPHS BY SIMON UPTON

YOU CAN TELL THERE ARE ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE BEFORE YOU EVEN step through the door of the Georgian townhouse in central London that Gary Hume and Georgie Hopton have called home for the past 16 years. The clue is right there on the doorstep in the form of a colourfully patterned mosaic titled *Two Palettes Entwined* – a tribute to the couple's shared creative outlook.

Inside, the house feels as characterful as its dramatic entrance would have you expect: a moody-hued living-room punctuated with vivid splashes of colour – chairs upholstered in bright yellow; an oval-shaped hand-tufted rug featuring collaged motifs of foxes – leads through to a light and airy kitchen that looks out over a lovingly tended garden. The Bloomsbury-esque prints on the walls and furniture feel fitting for a property whose location formed a significant part of its appeal. 'Living here feels like being in the crease of an A-Z – you open up the middle page and

there we are,' says Hume. 'You have all of the hospitals, the universities, the literary and visual history – so many brains, and everyone doing something good for people. It's been like this for years. You can just feel it.'

Hume is one of the original Young British Artists, rising to fame in the early 1990s and representing Great Britain at the 1999 Venice Biennale, while Hopton is a former Max Mara Art Prize nominee whose mixed-media works draw inspiration from nature. When the pair met more than three decades ago, they were still at the early stages of their careers and Hume was living in a shed that doubled as his studio; Hopton moved in for a while, until they could afford a small place on a busy east-London thoroughfare. Success gave them the money to invest in a sprawling countryside property in New York's Catskill Mountains, where they embarked on the project of creating

an artist's retreat and began splitting their time between the two homes, enjoying returning from their remote rural hideaway to the beating heart of the city. In 2010, after a lengthy search, they fell in love with the Bloomsbury property, which at the time served as *The Spectator's* headquarters.

Converting an office into a liveable home was a significant endeavour. The couple introduced



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unique architectural features, including an area of stained glass on the landing that was inspired by Hume's 2002 work *Yellow Window*, and commissioned one of Hume's best friends, who is a stone-mason, to reinstate the period fireplaces in a John Nash style. Their en-suite bathroom is also the unlikely location for Hume's visual signature: at the back of the shower is a wall of marble into which the artist has cut an expressive line 'drawing'. It was inspired by Elton John, reveals Hopton. 'He asked Gary if he could have a picture in his bathroom, and at first we thought, "Honestly, some people!" But he did it, and then he made one here, too – I didn't know he was working on it, so it was a lovely surprise.'

Most of the decorative elements are the product of Hopton's vision: in the kitchen, she chose yellow siena marble for the worktops, because she had seen the colour in a Renaissance painting, and she once persuaded her husband to travel to Lucca with her after finding the perfect tiles on the website of a small Italian reclamation yard. 'I look all the time – I'm voracious,' she admits. Some pieces in the couple's collection can simply not be bought, as with the wall-hung saucepan inscribed with a personal message from their friend Giorgio Locatelli, who gave it to Hume in return for one of his paint pots. 'It was a gift from one craftsman to another,' says Hopton.

Unsurprisingly, the house is filled with art, both their own – which Hume says he felt reticent about hanging, until he realised he would 'quite like to live with some of it' – and that of their many artist friends. The living-room is home to a sculpture from Anish Kapoor's 'sprouted potatoes' series, a Marc Quinn 'human embryo' and a Lucian Freud paintbrush; in the kitchen is a painting by Cecily Brown, with whom Hume did an 'artwork swap' (Hopton jokes that they were miffed when her sister commented that it was

the 'best art in the house'). Upstairs, a Celia Paul landscape, a Gavin Turk bronze matchstick, a miniature Antony Gormley figure and an edition of a Claes Oldenburg pretzel sit comfortably among Hume's signature gloss-paint works and Hopton's sculptures and collages. There was, Hume tells me, a brief interlude when they

had to take down all the artworks because they were putting up wallpaper, and he thought he liked the calm it brought. 'But then we went and got them back out, and I realised that pictures are like souls. The house was suddenly filled with the souls of people we know and love, and to have it occupied by them felt so softening.'

Hopton's work has always lent itself to interiors – in the past, she has designed wallpaper, curtains and upholstery featuring her colourful digital prints – and she has found herself increasingly in demand

for collaborations. The recent opportunity to partner with the rug specialist Peter Page struck her as too good to be true – not least because she needed to replace the worn-out runners on her staircases anyway and was struggling to find what she wanted. 'I couldn't believe my luck when they asked me to design a collection



The master bedroom



The kitchen, with a 2007 print by Rebecca Warren and a 2012 giclée print by Hopton on the wall. Left: Hume in the first-floor living-room, with his work on paper 'School House' (2018) above the fireplace and 'Waiting on Table' (2000) by Allen Jones to his left

'The pictures are like souls. The house is filled with the souls of people we know and love'

of my own!' she says. The resulting set of six flatweave pieces, several of which are on display in the house on the day of the *Bazaar* shoot, feature rhythmic patterns in a warm yet muted palette.

Ironically, Hopton says she will hardly be home to appreciate them: she spends most of her days – and sometimes nights – in her east-London studio, and will be away for much of the summer doing a residency at Dean Manor in the Cotswolds, where she plans to take photographs inside the walled kitchen garden, as well as growing her own fruit and vegetables. (Her other great passion, besides art, is cooking, and she hopes eventually to write and illustrate a recipe book.) Hume, on the other hand, makes a concerted effort to spend at least one day of every week in the house, reading, listening to music on his record player or just 'sitting here looking out at the garden until the sun goes down. I'm very slow, basically', he adds. 'In the studio, things don't always work, and it's the potential for failure that makes it exciting, but I like to have a day when there isn't the opportunity for anything to go wrong.'

That weekly hiatus aside, Hume is as artistically driven, and productive, as ever: he has two New York shows planned for the year ahead, and a monograph by Martin Gayford on his career is due out in June. He describes his more recent paintings as 'quieter, smaller and more emotionally interior' than his older work: 'They're about the viewer going into the painting, rather than the paintings coming out.'

The couple no longer have their New York retreat, having reluctantly sold it in late 2023, but their London life is full, with artist friends to see ('Gary was just at Rachel Whiteread's opening the other night') and their forthcoming 30th-wedding anniversary to celebrate. Nor has their romance with Bloomsbury lost any of its spark. 'When Gary's at home and I'm not, I get the sweetest messages telling me, "I love our house,"' Hopton tells me. 'It's beautiful how much he enjoys it.'

'Begging for It' by Martin Gayford (£45, Lund Humphries) is out on 23 June. Georgie Hopton's collection for Peter Page is available now (peterpage.com). □



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The first-floor living-room features a rug Hopton designed for Peter Page. She is pictured in front of Hume's 'Bouquet' (2009). Above: the en-suite bathroom, featuring Hume's marble picture. Below left: Hume's 'Nest #1' (2008) and Hopton's 'Ode to Spring' (2022) on the living-room wall, with Antony Gormley's 'Cast Iron Sculpture' on the mantel and another of Hopton's rugs for Peter Page on the floor