



Balancing act The family living room comfortably functions as an art gallery

Home is where THE ART IS

After more than 40 years as an art teacher and artist, Ted Coney turned his house into a gallery dedicated to his work. He tells **Sian Townsend** how his family home is the only place for his art

Everything I paint is related to my family,' says Ely-based artist Ted Coney. 'I painted my grandmother and her four sisters back in 1969 and since then I haven't stopped.'

Ted feels the subject of the family never stops giving him inspiration for his art work. 'Whenever we have a birth, marriage, divorce, or even death in the family, I paint it.'

The perfect place

So with a collection of art that relates to his family life, where better for him to show off his work than at his home? 'My paintings are so wound up in my family and our lives over the years, from my father and grandfather's generation to my new grandson,' he says, 'they just wouldn't belong anywhere else.'

Ted taught art at Hills Road Sixth Form College for more than 30 years and on



Stroke of genius Ted's collection of brushes

retiring decided he wanted to display his collection as part of his home. So he and his wife Hazel began their quest for the perfect place – which they found at 49 Waterside.

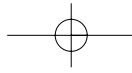
'We knew we needed a house that would work as a gallery, with a studio for me, and

located in a market town with an art link,' says Ted. 'Ely is perfect – we have the Maltings and The Babylon Gallery close by. Once we saw this house we knew it would be perfect for what we needed and it had a garage for my old car – it's part of our family too.'

Dedicated space

Opening their home to the public was something the couple had to consider too. 'I have to put some of the bits and pieces relating to my work out when we have tours on,' Ted says. 'For example, the airplane in the kitchen isn't always there – we'd constantly be banging our heads on it when we went to the fridge.'

Downstairs of the house is very much a family home, but also perfectly decorated for a gallery with white-washed walls and spotlights. Ted's work adorns the walls, each



interiors

Photos by Louise Young, www.thevisionstudio.co.uk



piece inspired by his family, including a card set showing the hands dealt as his immediate family members, and their relationships to each other.

Upstairs two rooms are dedicated gallery spaces. As Ted's work also takes inspiration from things that inspire him on his travels, many objects are on display as part of the tour. They include finds from an archeological dig, a doll's house and a fully-working puppet theatre, all housed in large display cabinets.

But the rooms can become spare rooms if need be. 'Everything in the room is on wheels and so I can have them back to guest rooms within minutes if I need to,' Ted jokes.

The tours, dubbed 'A tour of five generations in 30 minutes,' all start in the entrance hall where you can take in four walls filled with family portraits and a screen showing a reel of old family videos. The eight tours cover different themes within Ted's work, including 'Journeys', which represents his trips to find the pictures and objects that inspire him, and 'Puppets and Dolls' which explains works where Ted uses characters to represent different family members. ●

● Ted Coney's Family Portraits, 49 Waterside, Ely, 01353 650038; www.tedconeyfamilyportraits.co.uk. Saturday and Sunday 2-5pm throughout July and August. Sunday 2-4pm from September onwards. Booking is advisable.



Moveable art The plane hangs in the kitchen



▲ Left: The spare room is a dedicated gallery space. Top: A unique advent calendar painted by Ted Bottom: his beloved Morris Minor, now in its 78th year

◀ The second guest room houses four of Ted's artworks as well as a sofa bed

▼ The entrance hall is filled with family portraits and is where tours of the house start

