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Where the

Heart is...

Family ties are front and centre in this arty retreat

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House of love

From the dusty outback of Broken Hill to the golden gardens of Tanawha,
David and Chris Hart discover home is where the heart lives

Words SUSIE CAMERON



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Chris Hart still counts her blessings every time she walks through her simple, yet beautiful and art-filled, Tanawha home.

As she explains, "This is a very different lifestyle to the one I grew up in. I actually lived in a housing commission house in Orange (New South Wales) and then travelled around with my family and lived in a caravan.

"My dad is a minister of religion, so we went around going to different churches to help out.

"Then we ended up in Broken Hill. That's how I met David - I ended up working for his dad."

David, the son of legendary pioneering artist Pro Hart, points out how his current Sunshine Coast artistic abode could not be any further removed from his childhood home.

"Mum and Dad's house was a big one, but always pretty messy," he laughs.

"Not that there were clothes and junk everywhere, but there were always a lot of books and letters ... and paintings leaning across walls. It was a busy home."

David, an artist in his own right, describes growing up around his dad's organised chaos.

"He'd just put paints down everywhere and, if I went to paint in his studio and I was looking for a colour, by the time I found it I would forget what I needed it for," he says.

"I'm a lot more ordered. I'm very minimalistic. So I swung the other way. I just like to keep it simple and really neat."

The two Harts have created a family dream home for Jacob, 14, Chloe, 12, and Harrison, 6. But Chris says it certainly wasn't easy.

"When we first bought the house it was

the garden and location we really loved, but everything ended up going," she says. "We wanted our dream home and, while our kids were little, we just wanted something they would love that they could bring their friends home to and not want to go to someone else's place."

The couple paint a picture of a strenuous year of renovations, filled with daily planning and decision making.

"There is a reason for everything, we did not make decisions lightly," Chris explains. "It was a really tough year."

David, who worked closely with the tradesmen, says, "I pretty much project-managed the whole thing and worked here (in the home studio) as well." He jokes: "It started off as a renovation but ended up as a brand new home."

By building the home with excess walls and glass, the Harts created a blank canvas for some of Australia's most original art.

Chris points to the father and son's almost identical artworks of Surfers Paradise mirroring each other over the pool table.

"These (paintings) shows similarities, yet David's a little bit more precise and Pro is more freestyle," she says.

The savvy businesswoman believes the art has transformed their home and she has the before and after photos to prove it.

Despite their meticulous planning, David says when choosing spots for the artworks the couple was a little more spontaneous.

"We kind of knew where we were going to put a few things, but we've got tonnes of art," he says. "Tonnes" is an understatement. Chris shows 19 Pro artworks in one of their toilets, although she coyly adds, "They are tiny, little ones."

David, who hates clutter, may soon have to make more room on the walls for Chloe, as the genes are definitely a work of art.

Her proud mum says, "She's already selling her work and has a list of people waiting to buy."

"When she wants to buy something, I say, 'Go and do a painting'."

All the Hart children have set chores and have been brought up in a down-to-earth environment. This clearly has to do with Chris's attitude of gratitude, one shared by David.

After six successful years on the Coast, she says, "This still blows me away. I never had this growing up - I just pinch myself." ●



HOME TRUTHS



Favourite corner

When the mother-of-three gets a rare quiet moment, she loves to cuddle up and read a book on her favourite chair in the main bedroom. The room is not as bright as the rest of the home, but is silver and black, with a touch of blue.



Hot spots

The Harts are home bodies, and why wouldn't you be with an in-built cinema and outdoor entertainment area, where you can hook up a widescreen TV to watch the footy? David says the whole street "rocked up" for a party last Christmas.

Next splurge

A fountain to flow close to David's outdoor studio window, perhaps as a watery source of inspiration.



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