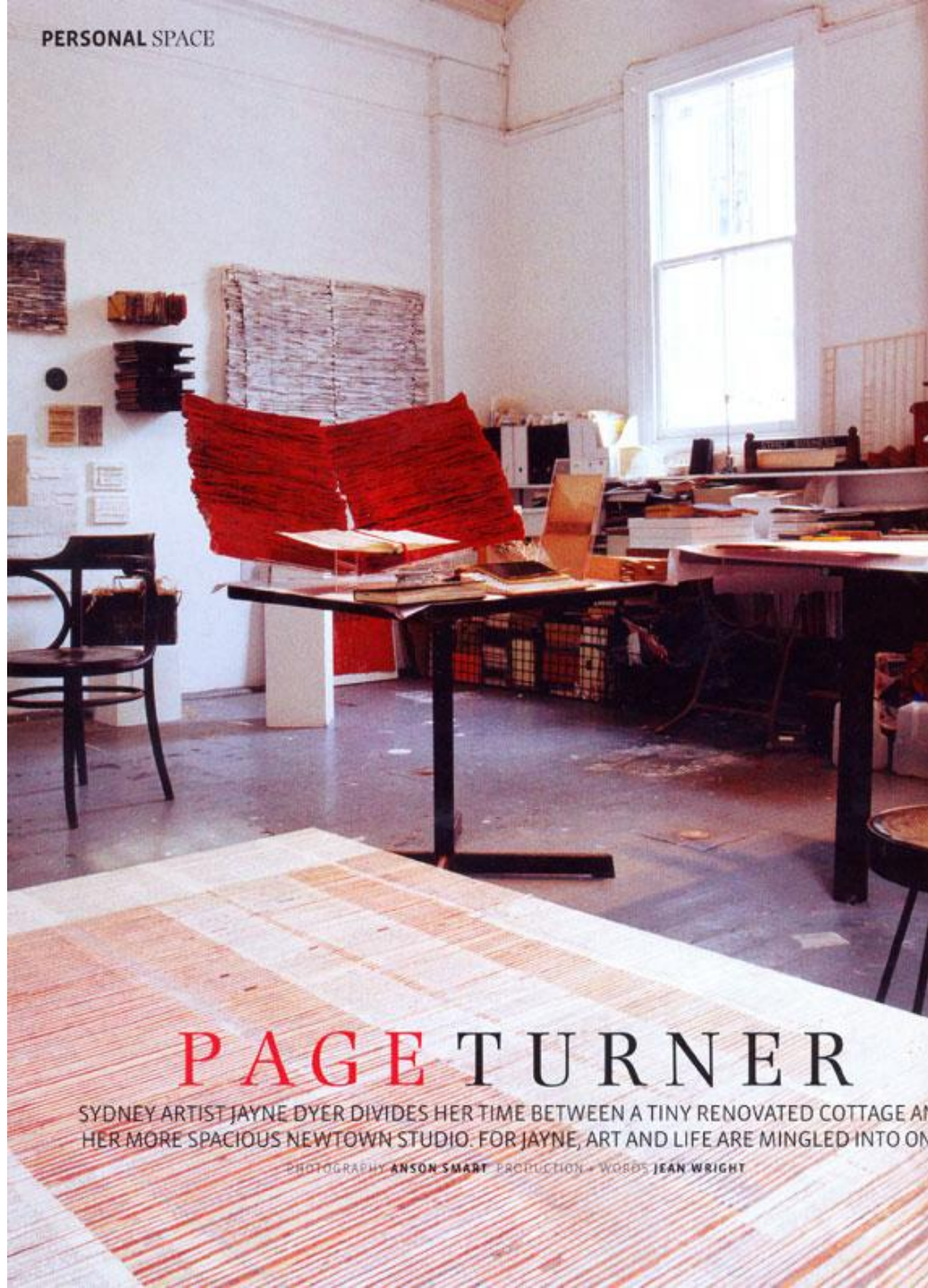


PERSONAL SPACE



PAGE TURNER

SYDNEY ARTIST JAYNE DYER DIVIDES HER TIME BETWEEN A TINY RENOVATED COTTAGE AND
HER MORE SPACIOUS NEWTOWN STUDIO. FOR JAYNE, ART AND LIFE ARE MINGLED INTO ONE

PHOTOGRAPHY ANSON SMART PRODUCTION + WORDS JEAN WRIGHT



THIS PAGE Jayne Dyer in her studio.
OPPOSITE PAGE Jayne's studio. Her large work *Between the Lines* is in the foreground. The red piece - *The Passions* - is made from newspaper, dressmakers' pins and paint. The wall work is constructed from Chinese letters, postcards and envelopes from the Cultural Revolution period.

As Head of Public Programs at the National Art School, artist Jayne Dyer lives and works in a state of transience, moving in an inner-city triangle between her workers' cottage in Sydney's Darlinghurst, the National Art School in Darlinghurst and her Newtown studio. Artist residencies and exhibitions also frequently take her to Europe and Asia. "I am seriously addicted to travel," she says, "and need periods of time to go overseas to research new work."

The energetic environment of the National Art School stimulates Jayne and given her position there it is no wonder she views a fine arts education as important. "It gives people the chance to be culturally articulate," she explains.

Jayne's own installations, assemblages and wall works combine ready-made and hand-made elements. Pages of books are stitched and pinned, information is blurred and hidden with layers of paint, and text is rearranged to encode its original meaning. Travel experiences are reflected in her work, with collaged paper fragments influenced by paper rubbings from Ming tombs she visited during her 1996 residency in China, while work exhibited last year consists of letters dating from the Cultural Revolution, which she found in Panjiayuan 'dirt market' in Beijing.

Originally from Melbourne, Jayne moved to Sydney in 1994. She and her partner, arts curriculum manager Reg Newitt, bought



THIS PAGE The living room in the cottage. A Chinese cabinet holds a bowl from Papua New Guinea, Moroccan plate and wood and brass pieces from China. Works by Jayne lean on the wall at the far left. OPPOSITE PAGE A drawing by Peter Booth, at right, sits behind a Bakelite phone next to the astronomer's clock.

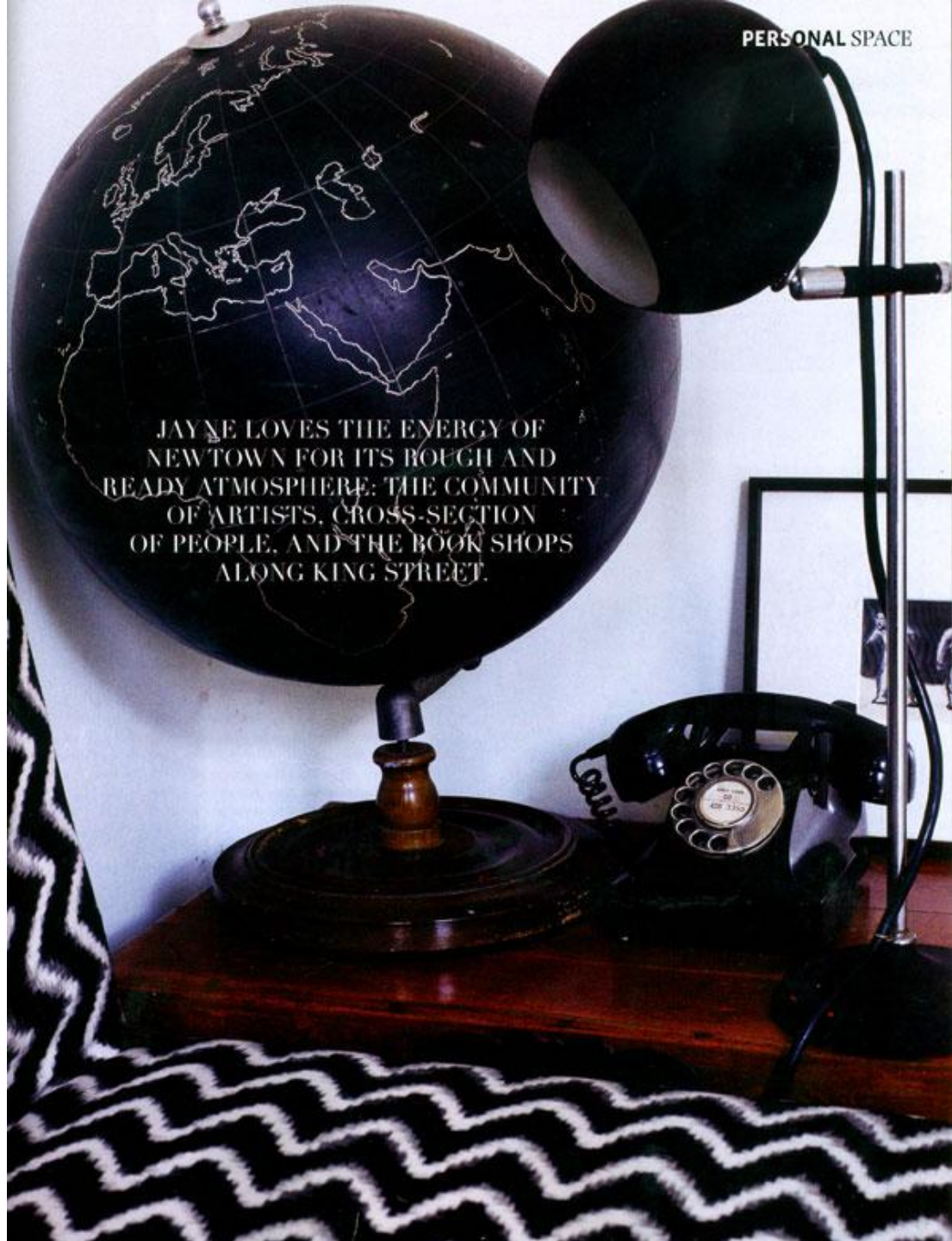
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their Darlington home five years ago. In a row of 19th-century workers' cottages, it is tiny in size, and, like Jayne, organised. "Paring down personal belongings frees one up mentally," she explains. Objects collected on her travels sit alongside her own and other artists' works. A metal panel by Janet Laurence leans against a wall in the kitchen behind two Chinese peasant teapots and tradeware bowls. As with everything else in the house, they're not merely decorative but used every day.

Her studio, by comparison, is an enormous space in a 1903 building in Sydney's Newtown. Once a community hall and local library, the building is now occupied by artists and actors. She loves the energy of Newtown for its rough and ready atmosphere: the community of artists, cross-section of people, and the book shops along King Street – particularly Gould's Book Arcade with its multi-level, warehouse-like space, crammed with nearly a million books lined double-deep on shelves. It reminds her of the antiquarian book markets in Paris where she first started collecting old books. Text – often as books – has been an intermittent feature of her work for more than a decade. "Tampering with books can be very provocative, for the book, like an artwork, can be considered sacrosanct," she says.

Jayne recently undertook an artist's residency at Hong Kong's Lingnan University, and has a solo exhibition, *Treasured Possessions*, opening there in May. "I am photographing people in Hong Kong and Sydney with their 'treasure' – at this stage the smallest is a porcupine quill, while the most difficult to photograph is 'time.'" Participants are also asked to explain why their 'treasure' has such significance. Jayne is also working on an exhibition called *Spare Room*, to open at Sydney's Elizabeth Bay House in July. Not surprisingly she is focussing on the library, represented by building towers and blocking entrances with precariously stacked books.

This artist likes the element of the unforeseen. For her installation at the 2006 Sydney Writers Festival launch in the grounds of the Royal Mint she produced a theatrical exhibition working with lighting and, of course, books. As the day turned to twilight, the books took on a red colour. And what if it rained? "But that is what it's about," she replies. "the unexpected." ■

THIS PAGE, ABOVE In the upstairs bedroom, abacus counters Jayne picked up at a market in China are displayed beside an etching by Mike Parr and small work by Glen Clarke. The painting on wall is by Beijing-based Melbourne artist Tony Scott. The bed cover is African fabric. **LEFT** Everyday functional utensils are within easy reach in the kitchen. New and enlarged openings and a skylight were part of the renovation of the tiny cottage. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Furniture is simple, spare and functional – such as these Chinese travel trunks, once used to transport people's belongings. A wall work in wood by Jayne hangs above a Chinese chair.

SPEED READ Sydney artist Jayne Dyer divides her time between the renovated Darlington cottage she shares with her partner and studio in Newtown. • Jayne draws inspiration from regularly spending long stints abroad. Her home is a reflection of what she finds on her travels. • The cottage was adapted to admit natural light from a greater number of skylights and wider, higher doorways. • The contrasting environments of a compact living space and expansive studio stimulate Jayne creatively.

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