

# ART TO HEART

THE STORY OF **ANDREA CLARK BROWN** AND **JOHN CARROLL LONG** IS ONE OF **ART AND LOVE**, PLAYED OUT IN THE ECLECTIC, HIGHLY PERSONAL PIECES THAT ADORN NEARLY EVERY INCH OF THEIR DOWNTOWN NAPLES HOME. THE COUPLE SHARES A BOND THAT SEEMS ALMOST CELESTIAL IN NATURE, MUCH LIKE THE ART THEY'VE CREATED AND COLLECTED TOGETHER.

by **KELLY MERRITT**  
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**Big Love** Andrea Clark Brown and John Carroll Long have created a home bursting with creativity, personality and highly covetable works of art.

**A World Apart** Long's mixed-media piece *Then and Now*, opposite, signifies the complexities of contemporary life versus the relative ease of decades past.

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Their tale began with an encounter on the very beach where they've since discovered many seemingly innocuous objects—shells, driftwood, discarded glass—that eventually find their place in the art Long creates in homage to his love for Brown.

Brown is an accomplished architect, Long, a celebrated painter, artist and sculptor, so their acquisition and collection of artworks has a colorful and varied history.

Upon entering their residence, the eye must adjust from the natural world to an ocean of creativity. Color explodes from a multitude of surfaces and materials. Despite the seriousness of their collection, the couple's art is personal. It lives within the house, radiating a warm welcome as if to say, “You're here! I'm so glad.”

The relationship between each piece of artwork is easy and unfettered, a staggering revelation when one considers the amount and variety of works the couple has acquired. Each piece seems as if it was created for the space it occupies, but that's no accident.

One of the first things to notice upon entering the home is a piano, which appears to be reflected in a wall-sized mirror. But a closer look reveals two black Steinway grand pianos. The stately instruments face each other, creating an optical illusion of a mirror image. Brown is an accomplished pianist who plays for Long whenever possible, and he is a willing audience.

Atop the reflective surfaces of Brown's pianos sit ceramic female swimmers' heads. The tabletop sculptures by Marie Gibbons are adorned with decorative bathing caps, arranged in multiples as if in synchronized swim formation. Brown calls them her “ladies.”

A little further through the house, just beyond the studio pianos, is

Long's vibrant *Break Out* panel, a massive work of art as colorful as it is meaningful. It was the first work he completed after the couple's wedding. Long created it to celebrate the energy of the relationship, with its string-wrapped heart symbolically placed at the center.

“Love and art and the ‘us’ of Andrea and John is very special, and we hope our collection reflects that,” says Brown.

Long's own artistic productions have evolved from a lifetime career spanning more than fifty years. His work finds space throughout the home, demonstrating his breadth and versatility in multiple forms of artistic media, graphic works, and drawings and paintings.

Some of the narrative aspects of Long's work are humorous, mythical and most recently surreal, with lots of layering of recognizable and unrecognizable figures. *Object of Desire* is an iconic wood, stone and metal hanging sculpture. *Joy-maker Jr.*, which occupies space on one of the pianos, is a colorful sculpture on wheels that perfectly complements the oversized *Break Out* hanging behind it. Florida's lush fauna is represented in several large-scale oil paintings of tropical flowers by Brown's mother, artist Marilyn Mullen Brown. The paintings are strategically placed adjacent to windows and doors that lead to views of the property's gardens.

Their collection also includes artwork by Long's artist colleagues, along with other artists the couple knows by reputation. California artist Michael Alfe's abstract still-life paintings have a presence in the Brown-Long collection, as do acrylic works by Long's close friend, the architecturally trained abstract artist Dennis Davis. Naples is also represented in watercolor by Naples-to-New York artist Ron Christensen and Naples artist Shirley Kelly. Somehow, the diverse pieces seem to coexist as if they were meant to be together all along.

The couple also collaborates on mixed-media projects, using objects of interesting shapes and textures they've





**Missing Link** Long considers *Crusader* a self-portrait, its churning chain a symbol of the mechanism that has kept him going during tough times.

gathered from walks on the beach, antique hunting, traveling and what they call “junking” together.

“We’ve found so much material from walking on the beach,” Long says. Or perhaps it finds them—Long’s studio holds boxes and boxes of heart-shaped rocks, coral and wood just waiting to take their place in a future project.

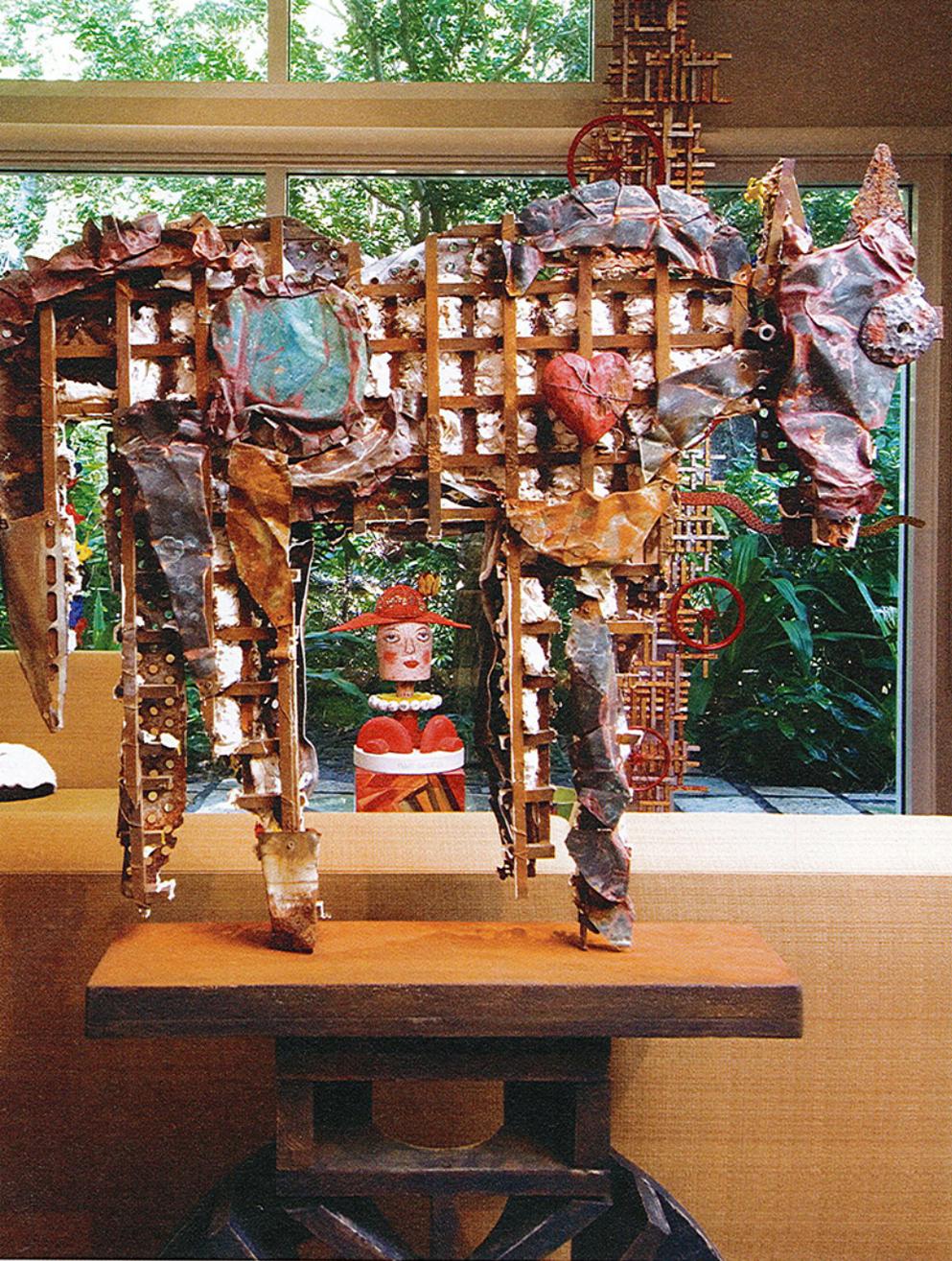
While the Brown-Long art collection can, at first glance, appear an artistic showroom amidst seamlessly arranged furnishings, more often than not, the home is peppered with works in progress. Transforming them into a feast for curious eyes, Long and Brown join together objects great and small for what becomes a permanent fixture in their collection or something for someone else to love and enjoy.

Though both Brown and Long sometimes get attached to their own work, to continue to grow as artists, they’ve had to let a few pieces go to new homes.

“An artist’s goal is to make every piece all it can be, but you can’t have too much art, because then it becomes weight,” Long says. “Art is a growing, breathing thing, and while there are some pieces we’re attached to, becoming a seasoned, more mature artist forces me to move. When someone sees it and gets it, that makes it all right.”

Long attributes Brown with sharpening his skills, saying he’s at least a 30 percent better artist because of her. While many couples with similar interests call themselves blended, Long says, “We don’t blend; we remagnify each other.”

That’s what makes this collection an essential part of their home, their lives and their love. AH

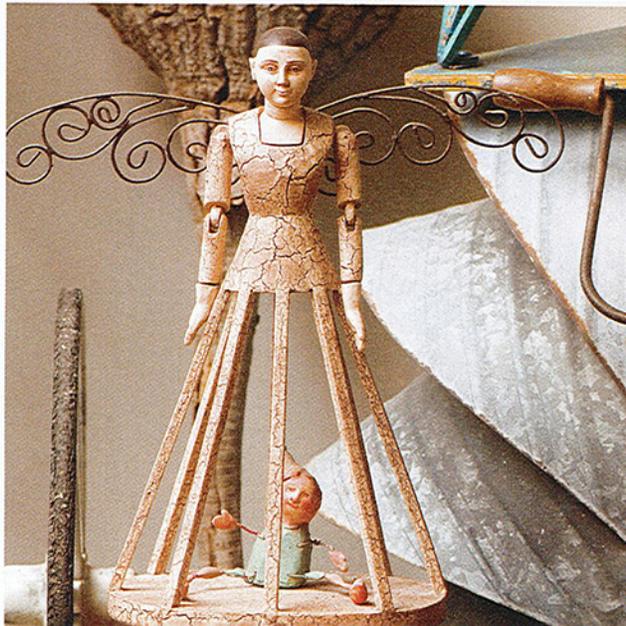


**Inner Workings** *Get Along Horse* is Long's two-sided equine sculpture with a billboard-scaffold backing and an army of cowboy and Indian figurines affixed to the other side.



**History Lesson** A life-sized 18th century remake of the famous right-hand triptych panel of the Portinari Altarpiece holds vigil over the living room, above right. The original, painted in 1475 by Flemish artist Hugo van der Goes, can be found in the Uffizi in Florence, Italy.

**Winging It** Long assembles found pieces in unexpected combinations, below right, which often evolve into new works of art.



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