

Home feels like a holiday



Artifacts from travels to India and China

Paintings by Roland Wabnitz, left, and Lloyd Rees

AT HOME

An architect sees the light by downsizing to the harbour

LISA ALLEN

Architect Chris Johnson is a bit like the Remington guy who bought the company because he liked the product so much.

For years the former NSW government architect, who leads Sydney's powerful developer lobby, has advocated the need for Sydney to flee their sprawling suburban homes and embrace medium to high density apartment living. Mr Johnson recently did just that — leaving a six-bedroom house in frenetic inner-city Newtown, which he had occupied with his wife Davina and three daughters for 40 years for a tiny two-

bedroom, two-bathroom apartment at Walsh Bay, overlooking scenic Berry's Bay. "We think we hung on too long to a big house, now that we have this lifestyle," Mr Johnson says. "It's fabulous. We are saying we should have done this earlier. It's like being on holiday in a resort. We have boats pulling up. Sydney's annual outdoor lighting festival Vivid, and the writers' festival. With my head on my pillow I am looking at the Harbour Bridge." The activity outside the Johnsons' north-facing waterfront apartment in Hickson Road, is

almost akin to the frantic pace of Bangkok's Chao Phraya River. If there's not an opulent American or French cruise ship liner floating by on its languorous passage to Sydney's White Bay cruise terminal, boats are pulling up at the wharf below the Johnsons' apartment for a quick take away coffee, or the odd sea creature appears at the end of the bay. "I like the bustle from the restaurants. You feel like you are out on the Mediterranean or the Riviera with the bustle of people

celebrations. ... We had a real flopping around the end of the bay."

But if the water view does not impress, their private art collection surely will.

They have three original Brett Whiteley drawings and etchings, as well as works by New Zealand-born Australian painter and teacher Roland Wabnitz and landscape painter Lloyd Rees. He has amassed works by Peter Kingston, and Reg Morrison plus a copy of a 1914 marble sculpture by modernist Constantine Brancusi. A painting

of sand hills by the much admired Warhol artist Dorothy Napar-gard has pride of place in the apartment's living room along with a collection of Asian bronze sculptures.

Of the Rees and Kingston drawings of the Walsh Bay wharves, Mr Johnson says: "They pick up the character of the fisherman. You get to connect to water and the whole lifestyle."

They paid \$1.36 million for the fourth floor unit, which was developed by Mirvac five years ago, noting that a similar apartment upstairs had just sold for \$2.26m.

having a good time," Mr Johnson says.

"At Christmas we had 30 people here for lunch on this balcony. We feel we are part of the Vivid

