



# Style <sup>4.16.06</sup>

## Artists In Residence



Liam Gillick

**An Ohio collector's home  
is a perpetual work in progress.  
By Christopher Bollen**

For those who live around the nexus where I-71 and I-75 meet the Ohio River, otherwise known as Cincinnati, Ohio, the name Stillpass is a familiar one. For several decades, as one of the city's premier car dealerships, it was emblazoned on the backs of Hondas and inscribed on license-plate holders. Until 2000, the family-owned operation counted among its proprietors Andy Stillpass, son and nephew of its founders.

In the galleries and art studios of New York, Los Angeles and Paris, however, the name Stillpass conjures a different image entirely. There it signifies one of America's most radical and eclectic contemporary-art collectors, one whose numerous commissions include a tricked-out Andrea Zittel "Yard Yachts" camper parked in the driveway. In place of a Stillpass dealership tag, the camper wears a bumper sticker by the artist Jeremy Deller that

**Photographs by Jason Schmidt**



reads "God Less America."

Stillpass and his wife, Karen, live quietly in the wealthy neighborhood Indian Hill, but their 1949 International-style glass house is anything but a suburban pastoral. For almost 20 years, the family has opened its doors, swimming pool, bedrooms, lawn, roof and, yes, Zittel camper to the leading artists of the moment, and the visits have spawned a series of startling, unorthodox collaborations. While other contemporary collections suffer from the predictable conundrum of how to fit a Liam Gillick gracefully into the comforts of a living room, Stillpass doesn't live around his art — he treats it as part of the family. A Maurizio Cattelan "Mini-Me" sculpture peers down from atop the silver shelf in the dining room. Karen Kilimnik's gory LaBianca Helter Skelter memorial (Stillpass supplied the title, "Acid Is Groovy") is scrawled in red paint across the back door off of the kitchen. "I said she could do it wherever she wanted," he explains, "but was glad



she picked the back door instead of the front." Gillick's mazelike yellow, blue, brown and gray stencil painting occupies an entire side of the house. Stillpass was a fairly new collector when, in 1987, he tapped Joel Otterson to create a working outdoor fountain out of pipes and a kitchen sink. "I liked the idea of commissioning, of getting to know the artist," Stillpass says. "Joel was the first professional artist I ever met, and it excited me." More commissions followed, and the trace of the artist working within the lay of Stillpass's life is evident throughout the house. A year's worth of exchanges with Felix Gonzalez-Torres, beginning in 1990, resulted in a family chronology painted in silver on



**Doug Aitken**  
**Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster**  
**Rirkrit Tiravanija**

Aitken's "Autumn (Installation)" (1994) plays on a monitor in the living room. Gonzalez-Foerster rearranged the bookshelf to create "The Blue Vein" (1993). Tiravanija later countered her with "The Red Threat" (1994 - 96).

**Andrea Zittel**

The artist's customized "Yard Yacht," parked in the driveway, serves as a mobile home away from home for visiting artists like Jeremy Deller.



**Richard Prince**  
**Joel Otterson**

Also in the living room, Prince's "Untitled (cigarettes)" (1978-79) and Otterson's "G.I. Joe Candelabra" (1992).



**Rob Pruitt**

"Idea No. 22 'Fill a desk drawer with gravel and make a secret Zen garden' " (1999) works just as well in the master bedroom closet.

**Elizabeth Peyton**

"Zoe's Kurt" (1995), renamed for Stillpass's daughter, who bought the painting with her Christmas money when she was 10 years old.



the edge of the roof that frames the swimming pool. Personal events like the birth of daughter Zoe ("A + K = Z 1984") are mixed with cultural markers like "Watergate 1972" and "CNN 1980." The chain ends with "Barbie's Dream House, 1989."

Not all of the art is easy to sleep with. Kalimnik's Helter Skelter work has alarmed the police, terrified the parents of visiting children and was nearly erased by an over zealous window washer. And the couple was forced to get rid of their headboard and purchase a hospital bed in order to accommodate a Sean Landers word painting. Some of the art has even weighed on Stillpass's shoulders. Two wool suits tailor-made by Zittel hang in the master bedroom closet; Stillpass was contractually obliged to wear one or the other every day he went to work over a period of six months. But all of the art is personal. Dominique Gonzalez Forester created a sculptural family portrait on the front lawn out of a freestanding metal clothesline bought at Wal-Mart and white clothes taken from the closet of each family member. Thirteen years later, a third generation of laundry airs over the street.

"Sometimes, it's like the emperor's new clothes," Stillpass admits. "A lot of the art in the collection takes little effort. It takes more time to make the bed in the trailer than for some to make their sculptures." He may be referring to the balled-up pieces of typing paper that Martin Creed placed around the living room on one visit — or the black



Jeremy Deller teaches Andy Stillpass how to be an artist.

paper napkins that the painter Rob Pruitt added to the detritus. But the point of these collaborations is often less about the final product than the process of staying up late over several bottles of wine that leads to a shared artistic purpose. "Real art experiences should make you creative, too, right?" he says.

To that end, last summer he invited Jeremy Deller to stay. "Deller is teaching me to be a conceptual artist," Stillpass says. "At the end, I'm going to have to show and keep my own work." One of his first assignments was to create a multiple that he would have to give to anyone who visited the house — thereby allowing the collector to become the collected. ■

