

House Beautiful

An Ode to the “House Portrait”

Portraits of our favorite interiors have more significance now than ever.



BY [HADLEY KELLER](#) APR 5, 2021



As a proud maximalist, I have no shortage of framed art in my home—in fact, it’s become a bit of a running joke that there’s barely an inch of uncovered wall throughout my apartment. And while I’d never play favorites with these adornments—which range from hanging plates to art prints—last month I received an original, 4" x 6" watercolor (a gift from the team at [Serena & Lily](#)) that made my heart skip a beat.

Rendered in intricate, colorful brushstrokes by artist [Lulu Qu](#), it’s a depiction of my own Brooklyn apartment. Over the past 14 months, of course, this space has become much more than *just* my apartment: It’s been my workplace, favorite restaurant, movie theater, and cocktail lounge.



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OMG in December @serenaandlily asked for a photo of my home and I sent them this; today I received THIS TINY PAINTED INTERPRETATION of it by @qululululu which is now maybe my most prized possession 🥰💜 #homelove

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Although the notion of a custom painting of one's home—interior or exterior—is not a new concept (in fact, it's long been one of our favorite housewarming gifts), after a year in which our homes became a refuge in more ways than we ever dreamed possible, their reproduction on paper or canvas now seems especially meaningful. It's commonplace, after all, to commission portraits of loved ones—why should beloved spaces be different?

“Life is one big series of living in—and then leaving behind—homes. Giving someone a gift that allows them to revisit a place of so many good memories isn’t just nice, it’s powerful stuff,” says *House Beautiful* Executive Editor Amanda Sims Clifford, who for years has painted custom portraits of loved ones’ homes as gifts.

“When I’ve painted pictures of my friends’ homes, even on postcard-size canvases, they’ve inevitably kept the thing forever,” says Clifford.

It seems we at *House Beautiful* are not alone in this enthusiasm for the house portrait, either: Tomorrow the New York gallery [Eerdmans](#) will open *Portraits of Rooms*, a show by Belgian artist Pierre Bergian consisting of more than 20 paintings of iconic interiors.



Mario Buatta’s living room, as painted by Pierre Bergian.

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“These portraits are portals into another world and capture their owner’s personality and passions,” Eerdmans founder Emily Evans Eerdmans tells *House Beautiful*. “We’ve all been cooped up for so long, looking at the same things every day; these are like a breath of fresh air and a way to travel—maybe not to another place, but definitely to another space.”

Indeed, while house portraits of our own spaces are artful ways of commemorating the familiar, room portraits can also satiate a certain kind of aesthetic wanderlust: As Bergian says of his process: “When I’m painting a room, it’s like I’m walking around it. It’s as if I’m actually in the room.”

And while most of the rooms that serve as Bergian’s subjects—such storied spaces as Jayne Wrightsman’s Fifth Avenue home, Karl Lagerfeld’s Paris apartment, and [Mario Buatta’s famous yellow living room](#)—will never be accessible to viewers of the renderings, the most personal details come to light in these portraits, presenting the rooms in such an intimate way that they can’t help but feel familiar.

That, after all, is the power of art—and the power of home.

Pierre Bergian: *Portraits of Rooms* runs through May 28 at Eerdmans New York, 14 East 10th Street.

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