

LIVING GLORIOUSLY

KEITH ROBINSON, OWNER OF THE EVENTS FIRM GLORIOSA,
BRINGS 18TH CENTURY PARIS TO HIS OLD FOURTH WARD LOFT.

BY TRAVIS NEIGHBOR WARD

WALKING INTO the Old Fourth Ward loft where Keith Robinson has lived for the past nine years is like entering another world. On the outside, the building is a typical turn-of-the-20th-century warehouse (it was once The Highland Bakery). On the inside, industrial-looking hallways give no inkling of the 2,024-square-foot colorful, almost theatrical scene that lies behind Robinson's door. But if you know who he is, the disparity is no surprise. As the owner

of Gloriosa, the posh catering and events firm that counts Cirque du Soleil among its clients, Robinson is known for his dramatic flair.

His home is filled with antiques and drama. The former are an eclectic mix of flea market finds and museum-quality discoveries. The latter comes from a state of mind shaped by strong design

HOME STYLE

Robinson (above, in his living room) likes to surround himself at home with rich fabrics, ornate detailing and moody art that inspire creativity.

theories. "Drama comes from the way light plays on color, shape, fabric, form and the way forms are juxtaposed to evoke a feeling," he says. "When you're dealing with things that have age, it's easy to juxtapose them." While his home evokes theatrics, Robinson considers it a restful retreat. His description of his space: "Comfortable. Peaceful. Reflective. Escape and refuge—those are good words, too. I'm a Cancer, a nester. I stay home a lot. I spend many nights alone with music and a book."

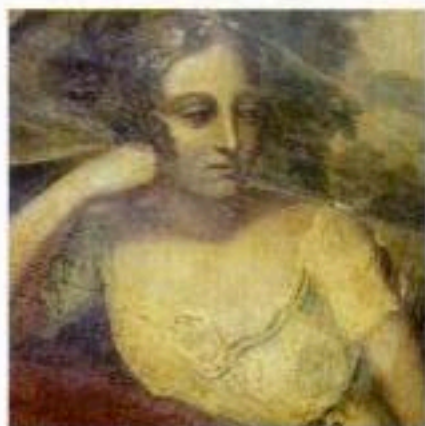
We visited Robinson shortly after he launched his latest venture, the special

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event facility Venue, just before he turned 40, to find out how he views his home.

Roommate: Oscar, a Pekinese.

Best thing about the space: Volume. "The soaring ceiling height. Being able to have oversized furnishings. I could never forfeit that."

Worst thing about the space: No natural light. "It has no windows you can see through. It's a nighttime place; I'm very rarely here during the day. But I'd raise the roof and put a gallery of windows for a downtown view. As much as this feels open, I'd love for it to feel more open."

Greatest convenience: His business, Gloriosa, is in the same building. "I can get to it without ever going outside."

Guests: "At least once every 10 days to two weeks. I like having three people for dinner or drinks. But I also love hosting big dinner parties with 40 people."

Favorites: Masquerade accessories; Oscar, the Pekinese, on Robinson's favorite chair; a dramatic DVD collection; detail of Napoleon's Josephine; the Paris porcelain collection.

Palettes: Off-colors, not true reds or true blues. "I'm really big on that. When you pair off-colors with other off-colors, there's a visual quality that becomes very complex. That translates to Gloriosa as well."

Main wall color: "I guess you'd call it celery—with a rag finish to bring it down."

Favorite piece of art: The painting of Napoleon's Josephine of the period, which he bought from a friend in Paris. "I had the niche in the salon built for it. It's filthy dirty, never been restored. It's moody, romantic. I love the dark moodiness of it. The blue, wispy clouds. Lots of details are lost—the birdbath, doves, flowers, fountain, butterflies. I'd love to be able to see all the details. But there's

that part of me that loves it dirty, like the tattered 18th-century sofa. I like decay, and the drama that comes with it."

Most-watched DVDs: *Farinelli: il castrato*. *Vatel*. The French version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, with Gérard Depardieu. *Dangerous Liaisons*. "I love that crusty, almost mysterious period. And the costumes. Glenn Close is amazing. Today's her birthday."

Addiction: "I'm an Anne Rice junkie. My favorite is *Cry to Heaven*. It takes place in Italy, about the castrati."

Favorite chair: The one in the den, his "catch-all" room. "I took it off the side of the road. It has great lines and reminded me of an English chair. I bought the fabric for five dollars at a thrift store and bought the trim for three. It's Moorish. Oscar sits between my feet and chews on the trim. There is many a night I fall asleep in this chair watching TV."

Hobby: Needlepoint. "I'm doing a monogram right now. It's a hobby I started as an adult, about nine years ago. It lets me escape. I obsess on it for a while, then put it down for a year."

Most nostalgic possession: The American majolica plant stand in the den. "It was in my father's parents' house in Biloxi, Mississippi. It sat by the front door with a plant on it, and rarely got moved around. I wanted it when they died. But there's a lot of nostalgia in here, absolutely. Just about everything has a story here, especially the smaller things."

Collects: Antique porcelain. "I collect Paris porcelain, from the mid-18th to the mid-19th centuries, particularly in two color palettes—a fleshy peach tone with a gold band and the same with a red stripe. I also collect old Limoges porcelain, but it's not that old, probably from the turn of the 20th century. I bought a 90-piece set at Lucullus in New Orleans. My family's from there, too."

Everyday tableware: The antique porcelain silverware. "It's all I have."

Can live without: A kitchen. "There's a coffee maker and a refrigerator here but no oven. When I entertain I cook at Gloriosa, put the food on carts and roll it over here. So the house never smells of food and the smells never get into the upholstery. The fabric on that 18th-century, red and gold Italian sofa, for instance, is the original fabric."

Cannot live without: A cup and saucer for coffee. "I'm a big coffee drinker. And half and half. I'll pass on coffee if you don't have half and half. But I don't need it in a creamer. I'll pour it out of the carton."

Redesign plans: Out with the old, in with the new. "I'm tired of the concrete; I'd put wood floors throughout. And I'd like to streamline the design and incorporate modern classic furniture. I do own some already. Four Barcelona chairs. Ten Bruno chairs. A Saarinen table. I'm slowly collecting things I love." ❶

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