

# Different Strokes

Martin Poppelwell's new Ashley Cox-designed studio lets in the light.





THIS PAGE: Martin Poppelwell in his new bespoke studio.

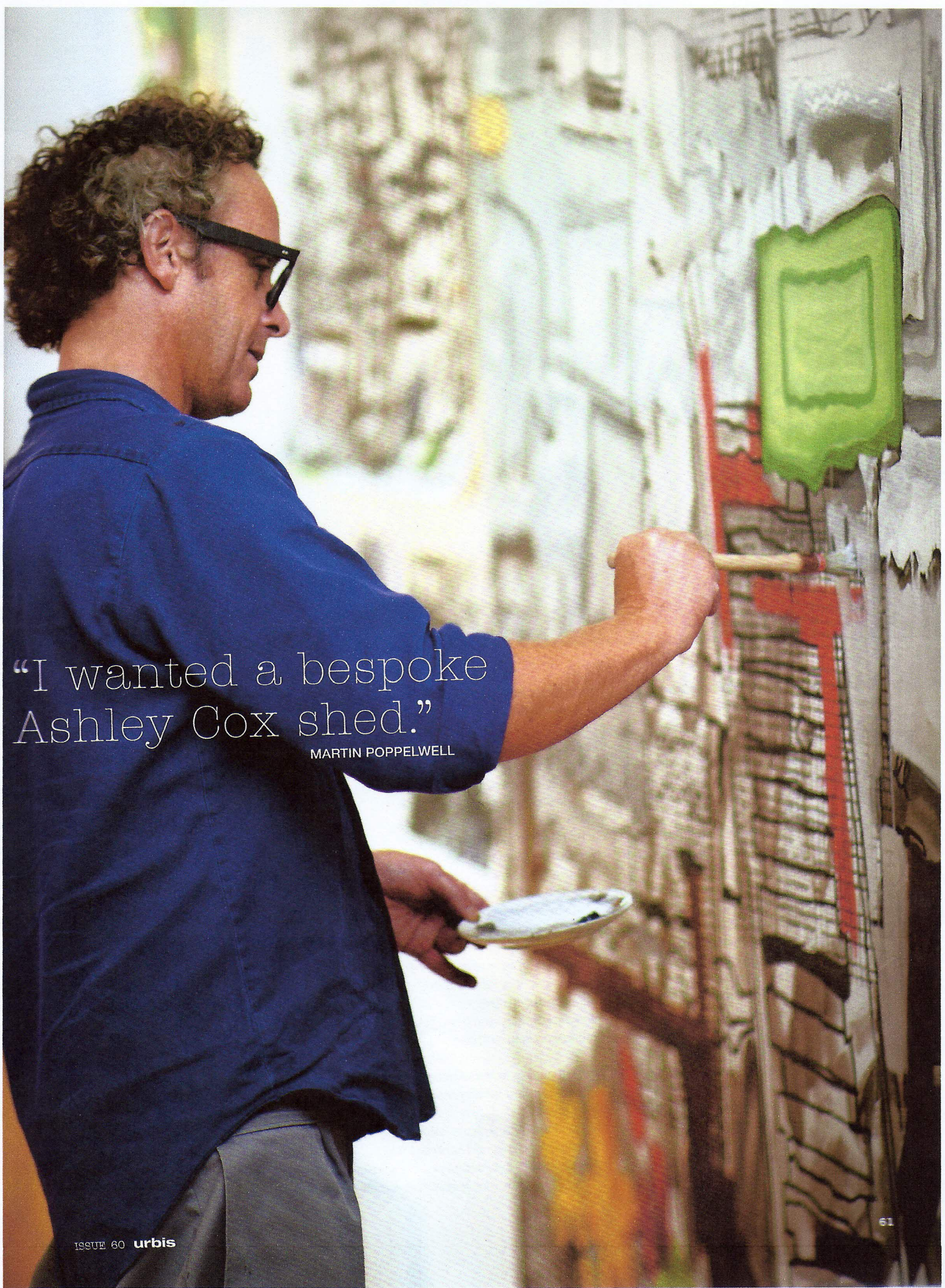


"I WANTED A BESPOKE Ashley Cox shed," explains artist Martin Poppelwell. Artists could just about be the perfect client for an architect: they appreciate aesthetics but are happy to bow out for much of the functional hammering out. Or at least, this is how Poppelwell approached his role as client. He says, "Once you're into working drawings, your role is to write the cheques and stay out of the way – if you're smart." He was talking specifically of not letting late-stage changes spiral the costs out of control, but his absolute trust and admiration for his architect has surely been one of the key factors that has led to the success of this light-filled studio.

Poppelwell brought Cox to see the site when the property was on the market, pointing out to him where he thought a building could go. Cox shook his head and pointed out a different spot for the proposed studio. Beyond a slim brief – Poppelwell's requirements were for three distinct areas: a working (messy) space, a storage area and an office area – he largely left the design up to his architect.

The studio sits lightly on the landscape and the space is tiered down the hill following the contour of the site. Cox has used basic materials to great effect, as Poppelwell describes, "It feels soft, but it's hard." The honey-coloured ply gives

warmth to the space, which is accentuated by warm Hawke's Bay light streaming into the studio through large windows and overhead skylights. Though Poppelwell has only been working in the studio for a few months, the biggest shift for him has been the pleasurable ease in working – he now has the ability to control the temperature or work on large canvases. The other key difference is that previously his work was distinctly amplified in the transition from his former dingy studio to the crisp gallery. Now, in working within such a beautiful, gallery-like space, he works with that crispness all the time, and he can see his work in a new way. **Nicole Stock**



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MARTIN POPPELWELL