

# IN PERISH WE *Trust*

Customers often type notes and poems on the scraps of paper in the typewriters at Perish Trust. Owners Kelly Ishikawa and Rod Hipkind have saved each and every one.

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Interior Photographs by KELLY ISHIKAWA  
Portrait Photograph by JEN SISKA



*Top to bottom:* Kelly and Rod met ten years ago, when they were both starting out in the photo industry. Old instruments, such as these vintage microscopes, are viewed as sculptural pieces at Perish Trust.

**BEHIND A PAIR OF MATTE** black doors at the dark and moody Perish Trust in San Francisco, obsolete objects—dog-eared bingo cards, wooden duck decoys, battered bowling pins—are painstakingly curated, becoming candidates for a new home. “These are the things that get relegated to the street corners and dumps,” says co-owner Rod Hipskind. Hence the shop’s carefully chosen name. “It’s sort of a play on words, evoking the idea that we take care of dead and dying objects.”

Days before the 2008 presidential election, he and Kelly Ishikawa precariously opened Perish Trust. As markets dove, jobs vanished, and wild consumerism suddenly waned, a new collective yearning developed for comfort and nostalgia. It conjured the perfect storm for a shop like Perish Trust, with its achy, sweet melancholy for olden technologies and peculiar timeworn pieces.

Rod describes the shop as having “the grit and industry of New York, the mystery and romance of New Orleans, and the natural, nautical beauty of San Francisco.” Upon entering the unapologetically handsome shop, it is clear that there is a discerning eye at work, or rather two pairs of eyes: Rod is a prop stylist and Kelly is a photographer.

Thoughtful vignettes throughout the store underscore their vision. It’s not unusual to come across a few dozen wooden arrows sculpturally composed. Or a flower frog employed to display an elaborate feather arrangement beneath a glass dome. Worn clipboards flaunt vintage ephemera, while stacks of thoroughly read zoology and battleship books reside between schoolhouse microscopes and decoupage paperweights. The criterion for objects at Perish Trust: they must be visibly aged and amusing, says Rod.



Rod and Kelly composed this nautical vignette around a painting by Oakland artist Jessica Niello.

Kelly has lived next to the Perish Trust shop space for five years. She is the latest in a long line of photographers to inherit the apartment.



SPACE  
TO LET



Next to a round oak table surrounded by mismatched wood chairs are framed black and white photographs displayed so neatly, you'd think the subjects were beloved.



Left to right: In the dining area, Kelly finds "something intriguing about the old group photos and the many stories they hold." Her collection of thermoses started with a pair her grandmother used every day during the winter—one for her soup and another for her coffee.

**ADJACENT TO PERISH TRUST** is Kelly's early 1900s abode, where she further indulges her love of art and antiques. "My mom is a theater teacher and my dad used to be a science teacher," she says, "and I think if you put those two together, you get a pretty curious kid who likes an environment with a story behind it. Vintage items naturally have that."

Inside Kelly's home, a tufted yellow velvet sofa and a Victorian-era sofa reupholstered in a pale blue and gold damask warm the living room. Opposite the seating, cherished old paper signs and sketches hang on a battleship grey wall. Glass-encased shelves are intricately arranged with books, vintage cameras, and other knick-knacks.

The living room flows into a large, charming space that serves as a kitchen-cum-office-cum-dining nook. Next to a round oak table surrounded by mismatched wood chairs are framed black and white photographs displayed so neatly, you'd think the subjects were beloved. "I don't know any of those people," Kelly laughs.



Top to bottom: Kelly constantly acquires new art books, which are stacked throughout her home—including on her desk. In her bedroom, an old military filing cabinet stores clothing and jewelry.

Under a pair of stage lights that came from the San Francisco Ballet, memorabilia such as a Vietnamese water puppet, cast iron fisherman, and a pressed penny collection truly define her home. “They’re treasures I’ve collected from all over the world,” she says. “I like to look around my apartment and be reminded of all the places I’ve been.”

The focal point of Kelly’s industrial-eccentric office niche is a tanker desk she inherited from a college pal. (She studied photography at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and moved to San Francisco the weekend after she graduated.) The large silhouette of Abraham Lincoln that hangs over the desk was part of an installation at Hang Art Gallery called Lucky Penny. For the piece, Rod painted an old crate that Kelly found for free on Craigslist.

Toward the rear of the home, French doors open to a small bedroom. (On the inside of the door are height marks scrawled in pencil dating back to the 1930s.) The artwork—nudes sketched with charcoals or painted with oils—in the decidedly feminine hideaway are all flea market finds. A bedside light was plucked from her own defunct darkroom. The printed pillowcases are upcycled from a couple of old money bags and peanut sacks. Nearby, a utilitarian file cabinet is topped with a collection of geisha dolls that trickled down from her mother and grandmother. A dainty dangling light fixture was fashioned by Kevin Randolph, one of the artists featured in the shop.



Above Kelly’s bed, artist tape is used to display flea market gems. “It doesn’t have any chemicals in it and will not rip your art when you take it off paper,” she says.



*Left:* The table and chairs were purchased from DWR, where Rod's partner, David Williams, previously worked. *Opposite:* David has been known to whip up a batch of his delicious sea-salted dark chocolate caramels in the kitchen. Earlier this year, David opened Hooker's Sweet Treats café, which is named after his line of confections.

**ABOUT SEVEN MILES** from Perish Trust, Rod and his partner David Williams share a 1921 Craftsman. The house was originally built on a chicken and egg ranch and has had only two previous owners. The landscape is lush with full-grown vegetation, from soaring cacti, cedar, and redwood to sprawling succulents, lemon verbena, and jasmine. "It's a little bit of the country in the city," says Rod, who characterizes their home as "Arts and Crafts meets farmhouse." (Friends liken it to a vacation cottage.)

Rod may spend his days styling polished vignettes for catalogs—past clients include Williams-Sonoma Home, Pottery Barn, and Gump's—but his personal aesthetic is industrial vintage with a mix of Americana keepsakes and Japanese relics. (Collecting is in his genes: his parents own an antique shop in Elk Grove, California.)

David, however, favors clean and modern lines. The dining room exemplifies both of their tastes. David's contributions include the Philippe Starck chairs and a contemporary baroque-inspired table. The neutral paint color on the walls provides the perfect backdrop for vintage landscapes and portraits scooped up at flea



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Above: The cozy living room blends rustic and mid-century elements. The wood credenza was purchased for \$25 at San Francisco's Alemany Flea Market. Opposite: In the bedroom, the unconventional nightstands were once used to ship tea.

markets. A turquoise chair, a \$10 score from a Gump's sample sale, injects a sweet burst of color in the room.

In the bedroom, colorful and graphic Japanese tea crates juxtaposed with black polycarbonate table lamps flank a low, platform bed. Above the bed, a glowing oil portrait suggestive of California impressionism is set off by the charcoal wall. A tall and partially rusted metal locker in the corner is Rod's go-to for tucking everything from invoices to high school mementos.

Soft sunlight pours into the living room, where a wingback chair reupholstered with fabric from vintage military laundry sacks joins a twisted wood stump. Nearby, two orange and white framed koi kites lean against the wall. A rarely used television is propped on a dearly loved wood and metal industrial cart. A mid-century pottery lamp with cork shade, Asian bust, and sprawling dreamy seascape enliven a credenza. An oversized letter "E" is part of a collection of wood, gold-leafed vowels. (He still needs the "U" and the sometimes "Y.") Whether he's acquiring pieces for his home or for Perish Trust, Rod adheres to the same truism: "I don't choose my collections," he says. "They choose me."