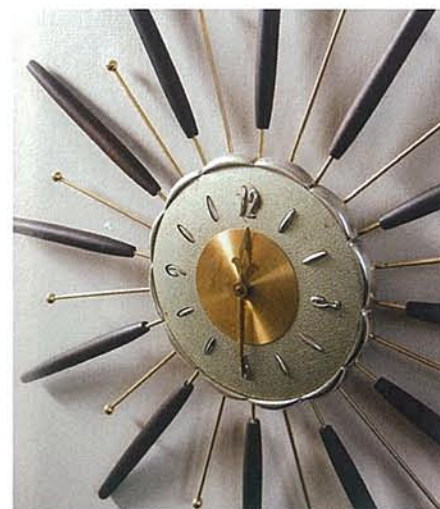


# Time & again

Pam Neville talks time with a collector of clocks

PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL McCREDIE



FACING PAGE: The clock closest to Linda Niccol's face is the wedding gift which started her clock collection. THIS PAGE, FROM FAR LEFT: A brass, steel and mahogany clock bought on TradeMe. An unusual wrought iron-framed clock. This classic Sunburst clock was a gift from Linda's cousin Ant Symons. A black wrought iron clock bought in a second-hand shop in Cuba Street, Wellington.

There are more than two dozen clocks at Linda Niccol's house but there's no point in asking Linda for the time – none of her clocks actually works because she has removed the batteries. "I couldn't stand the ticking," she says.

Instead the clocks are there for their decorative and design value. "They are an art installation in their own right," says Linda. As a writer of fiction and short films, she sees them from a wordsmith's point of view.

"They are metaphorical – they say something about how people are always running out of time. I enjoy that kind of metaphor. And collecting fascinates me. It's a recurring theme in my writing."

Her published short stories are usually about relationships – with a little collecting mixed in. Linda recently won the British Short Screenplay Competition for her script *The Handkerchief*, which is being produced by Kaos Films in England. At the same time she continues to work as an advertising writer in Wellington.

The style of clock in Linda's collection is called either Sunburst or Starburst. If you are old enough, you may remember them from the 1970s when they hung on the faux wood or brick veneer lounge "feature wall", above the La-Z-Boy or wooden-legged television set.

Linda's collection sprang from a single Sunburst/Starburst clock – a wedding present from fellow writer Vicki Holder – and has blossomed by way of a self-confessed addiction to TradeMe.

"I realise that it's an addiction and I've been telling myself that I really must stop. I have slowed down and become a lot more picky, though I still love a bargain."

Though most of the clocks are from unidentified manufacturers, some carry the name of prolific clock company Westclox and one is by the best-known designer of Sunburst clocks, American George Nelson.

They were first hung in the concrete-block stairwell of the 70s Kapiti Coast house Linda shares with her husband Eion Abernethy.

As the collection grew, it crept from the stairway along walls and around a window. But the clock collection doesn't have the house all to itself. It shares space with the couple's New Zealand art collection, Linda's salt pigs and Eion's car number plates and denim jackets.

Finding room to display everything might be an issue if Linda's addiction to collecting Sunburst clocks continues, though her habit is being curtailed by rising prices. These days the best of the American-made clocks are selling for \$400 to \$500 on TradeMe.

