



# A FRESH CANVAS

*An eclectic mix of contemporary art finds room to breathe and more to grow in the spacious seaside home of passionate Corona Del Mar collectors.*

BY JOHN O'HERN PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANCIS SMITH

On the far left in the family room is *Case Study 18, Daytime*, spray paint and stencil on canvas, by Michael Callas. Hanging to the left of the television are, from top, *Ausencia XXI* and *Ausencia XXII*, acrylic on canvas, by Luciano Goizueta. To the right of the fireplace is *Black Birds and Butterflies*, graphite on canvas, by America Martin. The sculptural ceramic pots at either end of the hearth are by Caroline Blackburn.



**W**hen Cynthia and Mike hired an architect and interior designer to design their new home in Corona Del Mar, California, they told them, “this art goes with us.” They had bought their first beach house there in 2012 and knew immediately they had to start buying art. “There were a lot of walls,” Cynthia remarks. “We’ve always enjoyed art, but only then began collecting. My husband and I usually land on the same thing. As long as there’s an empty wall, we’ll buy something. Mike’s as bad as I am.”

The resulting collection, brilliantly installed in

the new house and since added to, is an eclectic mix of realism and abstraction with pieces purchased from galleries and other pieces specially commissioned for their home.

Christopher Brandon of Brandon Architects in Costa Mesa, California, created, in effect, a fresh canvas for the couple, and their designer Denise Morrison of Denise Morrison Interiors (also based in Costa Mesa) to display the collection. Morrison commissioned two large abstract mixed media works from William McLure, an artist and designer in Birmingham, Alabama.



**1**  
 Hanging to the left of the door in the primary bedroom is *The Kiss*, oil on canvas, by Tim Rees. To the right is *In Autumn II*, oil on panel, by Shaun Downey. At the back of the closet is *Material Girl*, mixed media, by Nelson De La Nuez.

**2**  
 On the upper left in the family room is *Ripple Effect*, an acrylic and canvas sculpture by Stallman (Jason Hallman and Stephen Stum). The 12 small framed pieces are McKenzie Dove's *Ink on Paper*, pure oil paint applied with palette knives. Below the middle grouping is *Set Sail*, acrylic on canvas, by Marjorie Strider (1931-2014). The large painting is *Looking Westward, Thoughts of Home*, oil on canvas, by Glenn Ness.

**3**  
 Hanging behind the dining table and above the leather-clad cabinet are mixed media works by William McClure.

**4**  
 On the shelf in the living room are, from left, *Enlazados*, graphite on canvas, by Jorge Lopez Pardo and *The Falling Autumn Darkness*, photograph, by Brooke Shaden. Beneath them is *The Passenger*, oil on canvas, by Shaun Downey.





3

When they started collecting, the couple's friends recommended local galleries and they have since purchased work from JoAnne Artman Gallery and Sue Greenwood Fine Art in Laguna Beach, California. When they were visiting New York City, there was a small display in the hotel lobby of work from, then-named Arcadia Fine Arts in Chelsea. "We were attracted to what we saw," Cynthia relates, "and we went to the gallery and met the owner Steve Diamant. When Steve moved the gallery to Pasadena in 2016, as Arcadia Contemporary, we saw him a lot. Now that he's moved the gallery back in New York, Steve sends us his catalogs and keeps in touch."

Developing personal relationships with gallery owners is always a key to forming an important collection. "When we're looking for something for a particular room we'll pop in to JoAnne Artman's and she will load up her car and bring the pieces right to the house."

Denise Morrison commissioned the McLure works for the dining area and the





couple commissioned Anna Kincaide to produce a painting for their daughter and son-in-law's bedroom and bath. Denise had initially suggested a mirror for the wall in the entrance to the bath, but their daughter asked for there to be a painting there instead. They had seen Kincaide's portraits of women with stylized floral hats at JoAnne Artman Gallery and commissioned the artist to create a new work with some of their daughter's favorite colors.

"It was the beginning of the Covid lockdown," Cynthia says. "Anna had trouble getting canvas, and her young son was sent home from preschool because a student had come down with Covid. After the oil paint dried and she was ready to crate the painting up, she couldn't send it because there was a hurricane on the way." Eventually, the painting made it to their home.

Cynthia has been a member of the San Marino League, a "nonprofit organization of women committed to philanthropic work in the community as well as furthering their own knowledge of fine arts. Its purpose is exclusively charitable, educational and all volunteer." The League has raised money to support the Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens in San Marino as well as the ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena. In addition to purchasing work from major galleries they have also purchased works by students at the ArtCenter, including the ceramic artist Caroline Blackburn who earned her MFA degree there.

In their previous beach house, there were many shelves which inspired their acquiring sculptural works including bronzes by Tom Corbin, some of which now grace the study. Also in the study are paintings by Michael Chapman. "We're Mike Chapman fans," Cynthia comments. "They remind us of Hopper."

"If a painting speaks to us, tells us a story or is made with an interesting technique, I just want to keep looking at it," she says. Displayed on a steel shelf in the living room is Shaun Downey's *The Passenger*. "I look at the lines and angles," Cynthia explains, "and I see the woman in the bus window and I wonder where she's going and what she's looking at."

In the family room there is a large canvas by Glenn Ness, *Looking Westward, Thoughts of Home*. "That spoke to Mike," she says, "and reminded him of car trips when he was a kid and pulling into a motor lodge."

Next to it is *Set Sail* by Marjorie Strider, who satirized men's magazines of the 1960s with bikini-clad women. "I liked it,"





7



9



8



10



11

**5** On the far wall the couple's daughter and son-in-law's room is *Anonymous*, oil on panel, by Daniel Bilmes. In the foreground is an untitled commission, oil on canvas, by Anna Kincaide.

**6** The large oil on canvas in the study is *Couple with Blue Dog* by James Strombotne. The bronze is Tom Corbin's *Girl in High Heels*. Next to it is *Evening Sounds*, oil on canvas, by Michael Chapman.

**7** Michael Chapman's oil on canvas paintings, *Sunny Crescendo 1* and *Luminous Morning* are on the shelves. The bronze sculpture is *Girl on Swing* by Tom Corbin.

**8** The alabaster sculpture is *The Core* by Judith Davis. On the wall is *Seated Girl Oval*, mixed media with resin on panel, by Jane Maxwell.

**9** Hanging in the guest room is *Start of the Day*, oil on canvas, by Stephen Coyle.

**10** On the left in a guest room is *Woman in Pinks and Beige*, oil and acrylic on canvas, by America Martin. On the right is *An Angel Behind Me*, oil on canvas, by Dorothy Shain.

**11** Hanging in the powder room, from top, are America Martin's *Watching Waves on the Sand* and *Gathering Seashells*, mixed media on handmade paper.

Cynthia says. "I liked the provenance, and here we are at the beach." The couple have resisted the temptation to acquire "beach art." In the primary bedroom, however, is a striking portrait of a woman on the beach, holding her child and kissing his forehead. *The Kiss*, by Tim Rees, faces a view of the Pacific through the bedroom windows.

The couple enjoy looking for art and looking at it in their home. Cynthia relates, "I wander through and just look." ●