

CONTEMPORARY ART ISSUE

ART & ANTIQUES

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EXCITING
MODERN
ARTISTS

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Shops Palm Springs

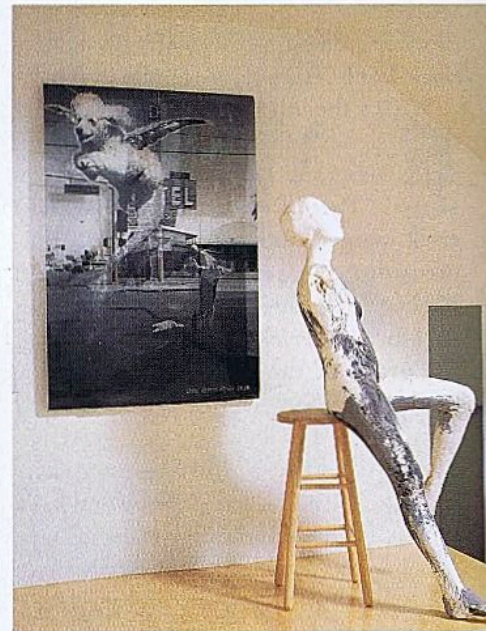
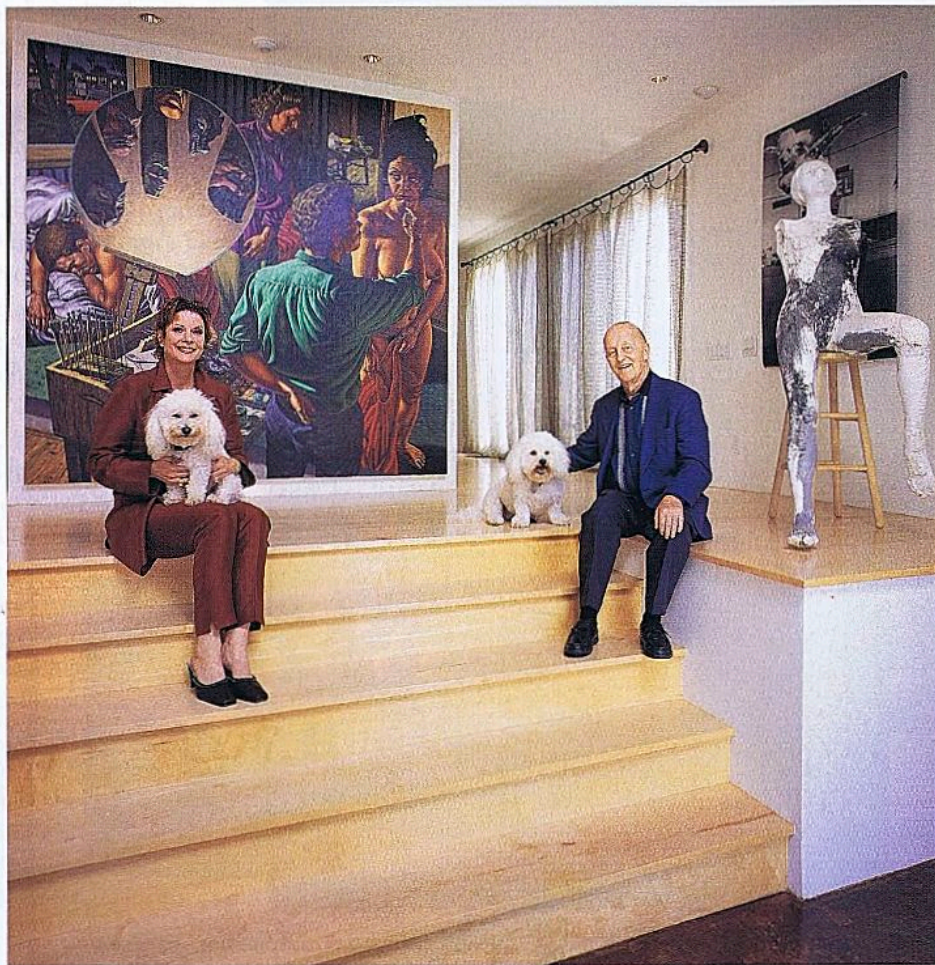
Detail of Jeffrey Blöndes' "La Noue Pitou.IX"

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Artistic splendor surrounds Teri and John Kennady and their Bichon Frise dogs (left). Behind them is F. Scott Hess' 1991 painting, "At Arm's Length." Manuel Neri's plaster "Seated Female Figure with Leg Raised" (above), 1959, greets visitors in the entryway. One of Teri's favorites, "Poodle Angel," by Reverend Ethan Acres, hangs behind the sculpture.

Contemporary Intent

Teri and John Kennady constantly "raise the bar" for their art.

By Kathy Bryant • Photography by Nadine Froger

John and Teri Kennady became addicted to collecting with their first art purchase of some hunting prints in the early 1980s in Chicago. After that there was no stopping their collecting passion, which grew from those early English-themed

prints to two Miró lithographs and finally to an entire house full of contemporary art.

"Our major breakthrough was going on a museum trip to Santa Fe and visiting artist Fritz Scholder," Teri remembers. "We loved a huge painting that he had just finished of the back of a woman with permed hair and a dog.

That was our first contemporary painting." The work was so large that they didn't have a place in their Laguna Beach, California, house for it. So with the zeal of true art lovers, they sold that house and bought a 1930's cottage, also in Laguna Beach, with tall, wide walls for art.

As the collection grew, the couple had to move again in 1996, this time to their current remodeled 1960's house in Laguna Beach, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean. The house showed promise but still needed work for it to properly showcase the Kennadys' collection. With the help of architects Jamie Gesundheit and Mike Chait, the couple banished the 1960's architecture by tearing down a third of the house, gutting a third and painting a third. In



the process, they reworked rooms and opened up the house both to let the outside in and to create wall space for their collection. The Kennadys liked the architects' suggestion of alternating natural wood and painted concrete for the flooring to complement the art. The exterior paint, in salmon, pink and violet with a bright yellow front door for punctuation, makes the house a work of art itself.

Whether the Kennadys are in their home or out in the community, they

surround themselves with art. Since 1984 Teri has served on museum boards and is currently on the board of the Orange County Museum of Art. "When we were just starting to collect, Bill Otten, the then-director at the Laguna Art Museum, gave us a slide show of artists and galleries he liked and then made us promise not to buy anything for six months. We were just supposed to look at art," Teri says. "We went to different galleries every week. I remember us going to the Susan

Llyn Foulkes' "The Rape of the Angels," 1991, a combination of fabric, Lucite, wood and paint, adorns the living room wall. Among the materials that complete the room include the painted-concrete floor and the fireplace facade of treated metal with copper.

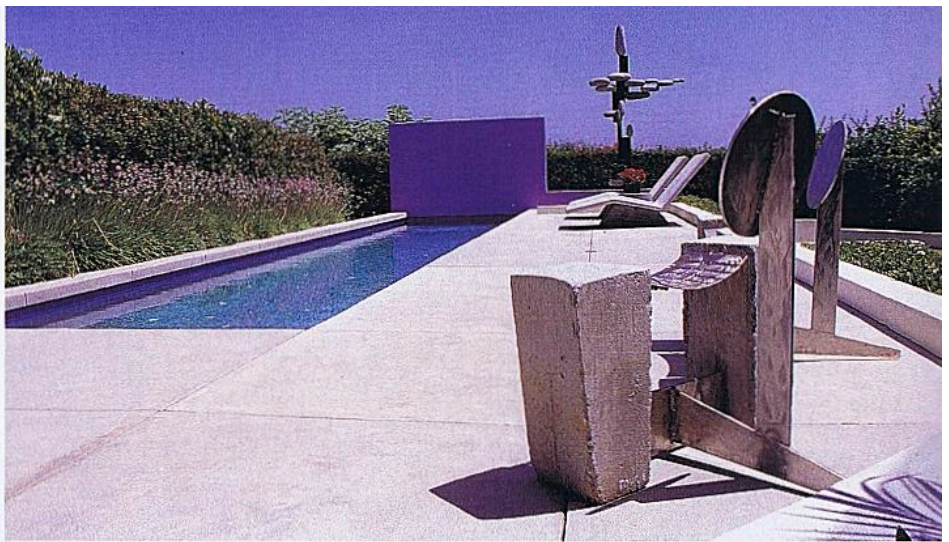
Landau Gallery and sitting on the floor like little students while she pulled out one painting after another and explained them."

The first serious piece of art they

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bought was Los Angeles artist Jim Morphesis' 1985 "Worker," which now hangs in their dining room. "We saw it and loved it—and we broke the six-month moratorium by buying it," Teri says with a laugh.

The couple agrees that the vision of their collection changes from year to year. "That's what's so exciting: Some of the pieces hold up, and they're still around us, and others we put away for awhile," says Teri, whose favorite work is Las Vegas artist Reverend Ethan Acres' "Poodle Angel," a computer-enhanced photo on Mylar done in 1998 that hangs in the entry hall. "He combines good ol' religion with edgy contemporary art in a mix that evokes real emotion."



Such edginess is found in most of the works the Kennadys buy. "I like representational art, but I tend to come from the conceptual side of it. I like a piece to have a little twist, a little challenge," Teri says.

John's favorite piece is an untitled oil by Jon Swihart. "I particularly like structured pieces where things are done

very well from an anatomical point of view, but there's still the question of what's really going on," he says.

Together, the Kennadys especially like Los Angeles artist Uta Barth's 1999 photographs, which show glimpses into her garden. "They challenge your vision," John says. "You think they're out of focus or that something's wrong with your eyes. It's like a memory."

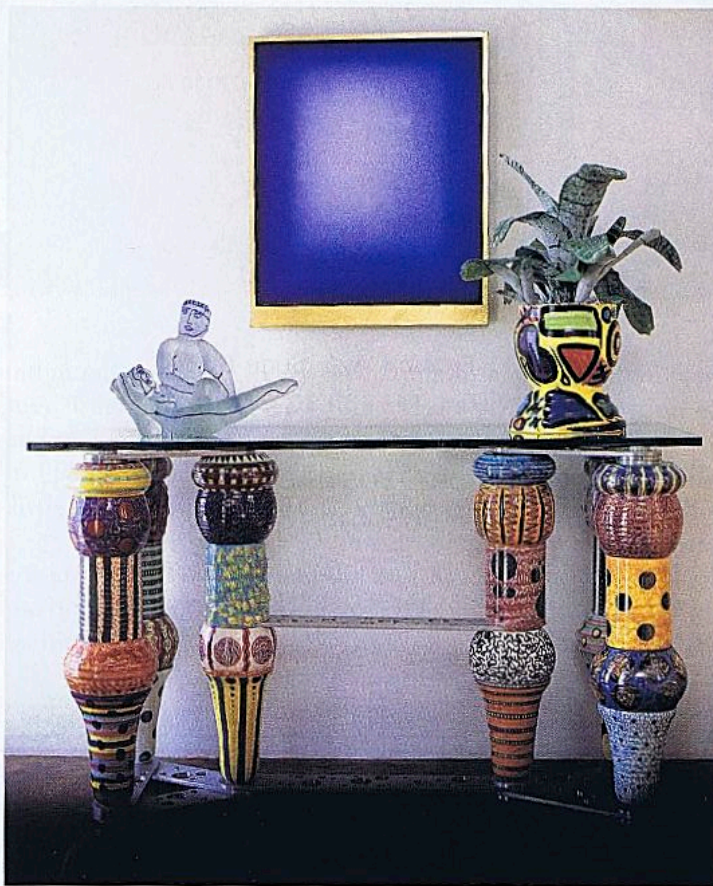
This juxtaposition between the often-realistic portrayal of figures and landscapes in the paintings and sculptures, and the hidden, often ironic, sometimes sexual aspects of the works is what gives the Kennady collection a real unity, as well as punch. There is always a sense of "Wait a minute. What's going on here?"

This feeling starts in the entrance, with "At Arm's Length," a 1991, 86 1/2-inch by 86 1/2-inch oil on canvas by Los Angeles artist F. Scott Hess. At first glance the image seems one thing, until the viewer looks more closely at the artist's perspective. "I didn't understand



Like the concrete sculpture erected by the pool (above, with David Tourjè's site-specific concrete and metal chairs), the dining room table (left) was commissioned from Woods Davy. Also site-specific, the table is an unusual soft-edged triangle set with dishes designed by Chuck Arnoldi and produced at the Grazia Factory in Deruta, Italy. Tom Otterness' 12-unit sculpture, "Zodiac," is positioned on the back wall while Terrance LeNue's "Problems of National Identity" is adjacent.

COLLECTING



it at first, but as I looked at it, I began to see at least some of what was going on," John says.

Other works here are the evocative 1959 Manual Neri sculpture "Seated Figure with Leg Raised," Alexis Smith's assemblage "Cleopatra" and Mary Burns' ceramic and glass table. The couple's latest purchase is a 1994 Tony Oursler video piece: A projector rotates different facial expressions on a small, hanging doll. Not only do the expressions change, but so do the sounds from the image's mouth. Another new work is Shirin Neshat's video still of Iranian women from 1994.

In the living room, Los Angeles artist Lynn Foulkes' 1991 mixed-media "Rape of the Angels" overtakes a whole wall and acts as a searing commentary on what's happening to the Los Angeles landscape. This work was featured in Los Angeles' Museum of Contemporary Art exhibition "Helter Skelter" in 1992. Another assemblage done in 1999 by Alexis Smith is also in the room and has a movie still of Samson and Delilah in a passionate embrace.

The dining room table is another eye-popper done by Woods Davy in 1994: Stones seem to penetrate through the glass, to create a sculpture both above and below the table.



Alternating natural wood and painted-concrete floors complements and underscores the contemporary art on the Kennadys' white interior walls. One of two Jim Morphestis paintings is seen at left, and Chuck Arnoldi's "Monkey See" overlooks the stairwell.

FACING: Mary Burns' ceramic and etched-glass table is topped by her plant container and Richard Jolly's glass figures. Eric Orr's untitled oil painting is centered above the table.

Tom Otterness' multiple sculpture "Zodiac," 1982-87, shares the room with New York artist Terrance LeNue's large gold/red, mixed-media work "Problems of National Identity," 1987-88.

In the den are more provocative pieces, such as Sandow Birk's 1989 large acrylic on canvas "Art in America," which depicts a burning Guggenheim museum being attacked by Indians with surfboards. On a more peaceful note, wooden high-heels by Barbara Spring sit atop Daniel Peters' wood console with Lucite inlays that colorfully light up when a drawer is opened.

"We're new to contemporary art, so every day we learn something," Teri says. "There's something very special about developing a relationship with an artist. And as it develops, we enjoy collaborating on new works for the house."

Currently, the couple is collaborating with California artist Gifford Myers about painting a mural with a water element on the stucco wall outside their glassed-in kitchen. One thing's for certain, this possible commission will not be ordinary—at least not for the forward-thinking Kennadys who are always seeking the cutting edge. □