



In the gallery, which runs along an entire side of the house, rests a Roche Bobois sofa. Across from it are three bronze sculptures by the owner of the residence, Aristides Demetrios—*Lovers* (bottom left foreground), *The Tenor* (middle) and *The King and Queen*.

MODERN ENVELOPE

A SCULPTOR'S RESIDENCE AND GALLERY IS BORN OF A LEMON PACKING YARD PUMP HOUSE

TEXT BY VANESSA KOGEVINAS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KELLY TEICH

WHEN ARCHITECT THIEP CUNG of Montecito-based architecture and interior design firm, The Warner Group Architects, was approached by world-renowned sculptor, Aristides Burton Demetrios and his wife Ilene Nagel, to transform their recently purchased cottage—formerly a pump house of a now defunct lemon packing yard—into a working gallery residence, he was at once taken aback and intrigued. The clients required three things: a gallery-like layout and ambiance, a working studio for the sculptor, and to use it all as a primary residence. It also had to be exclusively white.

Looking at the 2,000-square-foot 1920s stone cottage in the tony Montecito-located Birnam Wood Golf Club community—he thought, “How can I fit an art gallery into this project? How can I work with this building?” “I remember I stood there,” he says, “and it almost reminded me of someone handing me a 1920s Model-T Ford and asking me to make it go eighty miles per hour.”

Cung came up with what he refers to as the ‘wrap around concept’, where he embedded the existing structure in a new contemporary exterior. Then they added a living room, a large open plan dining and kitchen area, and an office/studio for Demetrios—with a gallery hall connecting all the spaces—bringing the square footage to 4,170 square feet.

“Everything on the interior is white,” says Thiep, “with lots of steel and aluminum windows and pocket doors, sometimes as tall as thirteen feet, and fifteen foot ceilings. It creates a gallery feel and brings the gardens to the interiors.” In fact, two entire walls in the living room disappear as pocket doors, literally erasing any indoor/outdoor divide. Travertine flooring throughout only enhances it all.



The residence is filled with masterfully curated sculptures and artwork—most created by Demetrios. “He is the most prolific sculptor I know,” says Cung. At eighty five, the sculptor is producing one work a day—vividly colored wall art created with a three-dimensional monitoring software; the artist’s answer to tired joints. “The work is very ‘au courant’” notes Nagel. Sculptures ranging in size and material—everything from brushed bronze to bold-hued lacquered steel and sharp angles to soft rounded edges—are displayed on pedestals, consoles, in pocket gardens.

The lighting and furniture are just as inspiring as the art and architecture. “We have a passion for architecturally classic pieces,” says Nagel. Work by Frank Gehry, Patricia Urquiola for Morosa, Le Corbusier and Issey Miyake were all chosen specifically for the home.

“Whenever I enter I feel the peace and tranquility of the interior space with all the beautiful pieces,” says Cung. It doesn’t hurt that the



TOP The dining room (foreground)—with the living room directly off of it—boasts a chandelier from FLOS and Frank Gehry-designed dining chairs from Knoll. **ABOVE** A red, powder-coated steel sculpture, *A Celebratory Dance* by Demetrios, bursts from the coffee table in the living room. **OPPOSITE** *Generations*, by Demetrios, is a steel sculpture about families and his *Verging Ribbons*, in red powder-coated steel, sits beside it.



The white stucco-finished home was designed by architect Thiep Cung to view art and furniture pieces from virtually every window looking in. *Celebration*, by Demetrios, is displayed in a pocket garden by the rose garden, which flowers three hundred of the blooms.



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backdrops are the Santa Ynez mountains and a golf course. In the end, the architect—in close collaboration with Nagel and Demetrios—successfully designed a contemporary, modern house programmed to compliment the illustrious sculptor’s works while fitting into a more traditional community and at once preserving one of the lands’ first buildings—a lemon packing yard’s pump house. “My husband is thrilled by the home,” says Nagel. “The way the architecture and art complement each other so perfectly and seamlessly.” CH

Red sculptures, *Joyous Reverie* (right) and *A Merry Morning* (left)— both by Demetrios—flank a B&B Italia sofa in the master bedroom’s sunroom. Wassily chairs and a Louis Poulsen chandelier complete the space.

BELOW *Tomorrow’s Dreams* by Demetrios and Issey Miyake pendant lights command attention in the living room. White leather Le Corbusier chairs and a Patricia Urquola for Moroso sofa of the same material make up its sitting area.

