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LAST MAN STANDING

KENNY SCHAEF AMERICA'S PREMIER POP ARTIST SPEAKS CANDIDLY ABOUT HIS CONTEMPORARIES WARHOL, BASQUIAT AND HARING AND WHAT'S LEFT FOR HIM TO CONQUER. BY KEVIN SESSUMS

YAYOI KUSAMA

BY CARRIE NIEMAN CULPEPPER

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WHEN ART FINDS A HOME

*Just a little story about an art lover,
her world-class collection, a designer and
five spectacular California homes.*

BY MICHAEL LIBERATORE

Photography by Matthew Millman

VIEW? WHAT VIEW? Visitors to Chara Schreyer's Los Angeles home may find it hard to focus on the sweeping metropolitan panorama beyond her terrace since the living room boasts a gallery's worth of modern masterpieces, including (at left) Donald Judd's *Untitled (Stack)*, 1969, in stainless steel and red fluorescent Plexiglas, (center) Christian Marclay's *Stool*, 1992, which features brass horn and tassels, and (outside) Stephen de Staebler's monumental bronze *Archangel*, 1987.

"I imagine that, at night, when I turn out the lights, each piece of artwork talks to the others."



ART MOVERS Longtime collaborators, designer Gary Hutton and art collector Chara Schreyer, photographed in her San Francisco home.

I wasn't raised with art," lifelong collector Chara Schreyer tells me. This is difficult to believe as I sit in her stunning home, perched high in the hills above West Hollywood, California, and take a silent inventory of the modern and contemporary masterpieces which abound—works by Louise Nevelson, Andy Warhol, Ruth Asawa, Jeff Koons, Richard Artschwager, Robert Morris, Mark Bradford, Lee Bontecou, Tony Feher and so many more. "My parents were Holocaust survivors," she explains. "My father lived seven to a room. Food was more of a concern than art." It occurs to me, after spending time with Schreyer and touring her spectacular residence, that art, and designing homes that showcase it, are *her* sustenance.

Over the course of a 40-year collaboration, Schreyer and interior designer Gary Hutton have created six homes, all in California—from a San Francisco high-rise, to a mid-century gem in Tiburon, in Marin County, to a Los Angeles architectural tour de force—whose *raison d'être*, beyond living in them, are to house Schreyer's mind-blowing menagerie of paintings, photography, sculptures, drawings and installations. The fruits of this partnership are beautifully chronicled in *Art House*, Assouline's sumptuous new tome.

Such is Schreyer's devotion that some of these houses were, in fact, designed around a single piece of art or furniture. "We built the Tiburon house, essentially, around two Giò Ponti chairs," Hutton tells me, recalling their origin. "I spotted them when we were driving down Beverly Boulevard, and I yelled to Chara, 'Stop the car!' We were refurbishing the house for the second time, and I felt they were essential. They were a bit damaged, and Chara wasn't sure about them. She finally acquiesced when I promised to refinish the damaged legs."

The chairs, like most of Hutton's work, are upholstered in neutral tones, but feature a surprising bold splash of color that is both unexpected and welcome—in this case, a sky-blue suede seat and seat-back. They stand at attention in the Tiburon living room, silently observing Frank Stella's vibrant

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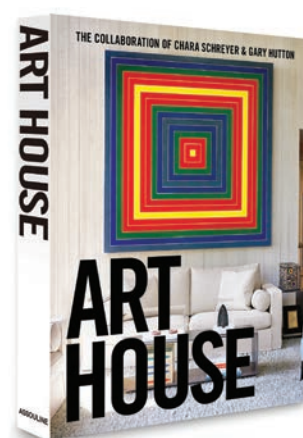
Honduras Lottery Co. “Everything, including furnishings, takes a backseat to the art,” Hutton says. “Nothing can come into the space that will impede the dialogue between pieces of artwork.”

Schreyer’s artistic philosophy incorporates both the subconscious and the psychoanalytic. Art must challenge convention, she says, yet speak to her in a deeply meaningful way. “I imagine that, at night, when I turn out the lights, each piece of artwork talks to the others, much like the José Ferrer film biography of Toulouse-Lautrec [John Huston’s 1952 *Moulin Rouge*, starring Ferrer],” Schreyer says. “When Toulouse-Lautrec would go to bed for the night, all of his subjects would come to life and dance above his head.”

Schreyer traces the importance of art in her life to her childhood. “I was born in Germany and moved to the US with my family when I was five,” she says. “Yiddish and German were my first languages, not English. To me, understanding communication is understanding the intrinsic beauty of art. I see art as storytelling and indicative of certain times and places in history. The meaning and the story can change depending on the current political climate and time in history.” Accordingly, she rethinks, again and again, the placement of her artwork, always trying to improve on how best to allow each piece to tell its tale.

When I ask the collector which of her homes is her favorite, she initially demurs. “Oh, it’s so hard to say. I love them all. But the Tiburon home is very special. And, of course, I love the LA residence.” Understandably so, I think, with its panoramic views of the city, to say nothing of the painstakingly curated interior. As we chat, I’m seated just below Mark Bradford’s imposing *A Thousand Daddies* collage, which is adjacent to Donald Judd’s Plexiglas sculpture, *Untitled (Stack)*. Judd’s piece was a driving force behind Schreyer’s purchase of the house. “It fits perfectly in that corner, don’t you think?” she says. I look at it and see, immediately, that she’s right. “The light captures its essence so beautifully.”

“Chara never sits still,” Hutton tells me. “She has more energy than ten people.” Indeed, apart from tending to her own vast collection,



MASTERPIECES IN MARIN (CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT) Keith Tyson’s *Studio Wall Drawing: Domestic Pairs—Lamps*, 2000, dominates a dining area in Schreyer’s Tiburon, CA home; One corner of the all-white master bedroom features Louise Bourgeois’ *Harmless Woman*, 1969, and on the wall behind it, *Exquisite Corpse*, a 2010 work to which Robert Gober, Bourgeois and Karen Kilimnik all contributed elements; The cover of *Art House* shows the Tiburon living room, where Frank Stella’s *Honduras Lottery Co.*, 1962, has pride of place; Near the Stella, on a table sits Man Ray’s *Cadeau (Gift)*, 1962, a metal iron, its bottom studded with black tacks—and an icon of the Dada movement.

Schreyer is very active in the philanthropic art world—she sits on the boards of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles’ Hammer Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art, all in the name of inspiring, educating and deepening others’ appreciation for contemporary art. Before I can even ask, she reveals her first “a-ha” moment regarding her love of the modern. “It was when I first saw *Femme au Chapeau* by Henri Matisse. The colors on her face... It was radical yet so beautiful. I’m drawn to art that challenges convention.”

What, I wonder, will become of this magnificent collection when she is no longer here to curate, rearrange and love each piece? Does she envision a museum bearing her name and showcasing her artwork? “Oh, no,”

Schreyer says. “I’ve already decided which pieces will go where. Some will stay with my family, but others will go where they’re most needed—some museums have a lack of representation by certain artists, and I want to fill that void, to complete their story.”