



The Blackmore family's dream  
*of the ideal utopian digs*

# Home

The historic compound's first floor includes a gallery space perfectly sited to display the work of **STEPHEN EDWARDS**.  
Opposite: The **BLACKMORE FAMILY** in front of their 1907 apartment building once owned by renowned photographers Carolyn and Edwin Gledhill.



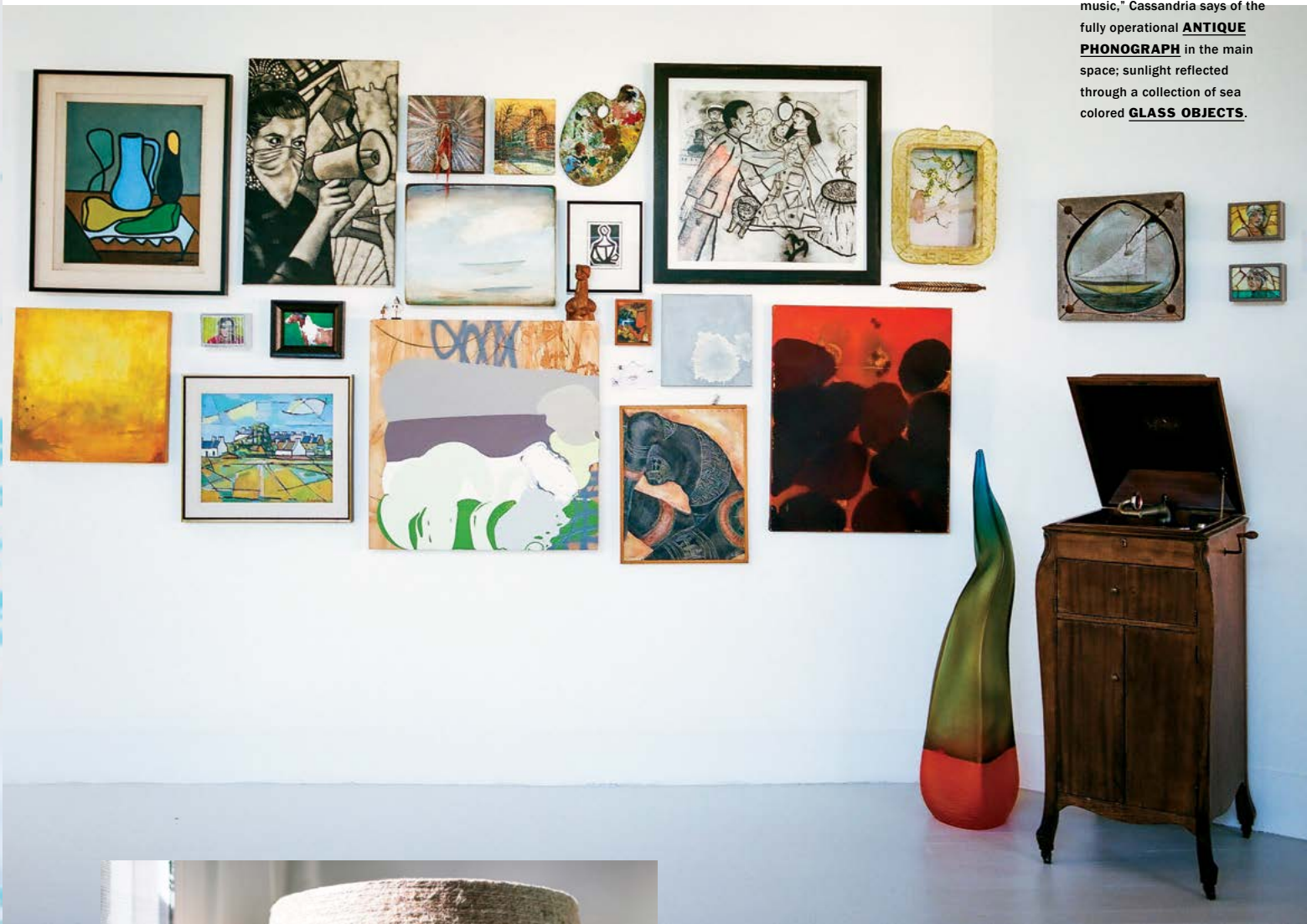
WRITTEN BY L.D. PORTER  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY NANCY NEIL

*is where the Art is*

Cassandra at work on one of her **REVERSE GLASS PAINTINGS** that will ultimately be shattered and reconstructed.



Top to bottom: "We felt the building wanted to hear its old music," Cassandra says of the fully operational **ANTIQU** **PHONOGRAPH** in the main space; sunlight reflected through a collection of sea colored **GLASS OBJECTS**.



► After 20 years in Seattle, Cassandra and Jon Blackmore needed sunshine. Heading down the California coast in their fully equipped diesel motor home with their children Orion and Leona, the couple was pursuing a dream. Cassandra, an artist and California native, yearned to live by the ocean; Jon, a musician born in Tucson, fondly recalled his home state's majestic Santa Catalina mountains. The family made several stops along the way, but when they rounded the bend from El Capitán State Beach, they knew Santa Barbara—with its mountains adjacent to the ocean—was where they wanted to stay.

As artists accustomed to unconventional living spaces, Cassandra and Jon lived in abandoned Seattle warehouses at the height of the grunge music era and were known for salonlike parties combining local artists and musicians. Finding a comparable living situation in Santa Barbara proved daunting to say the least, but the Blackmores had luck (and persistence) on their side. Following up on an Internet listing for a photography studio, they happened upon a vintage apartment building that seemed to have been waiting for them to discover it.

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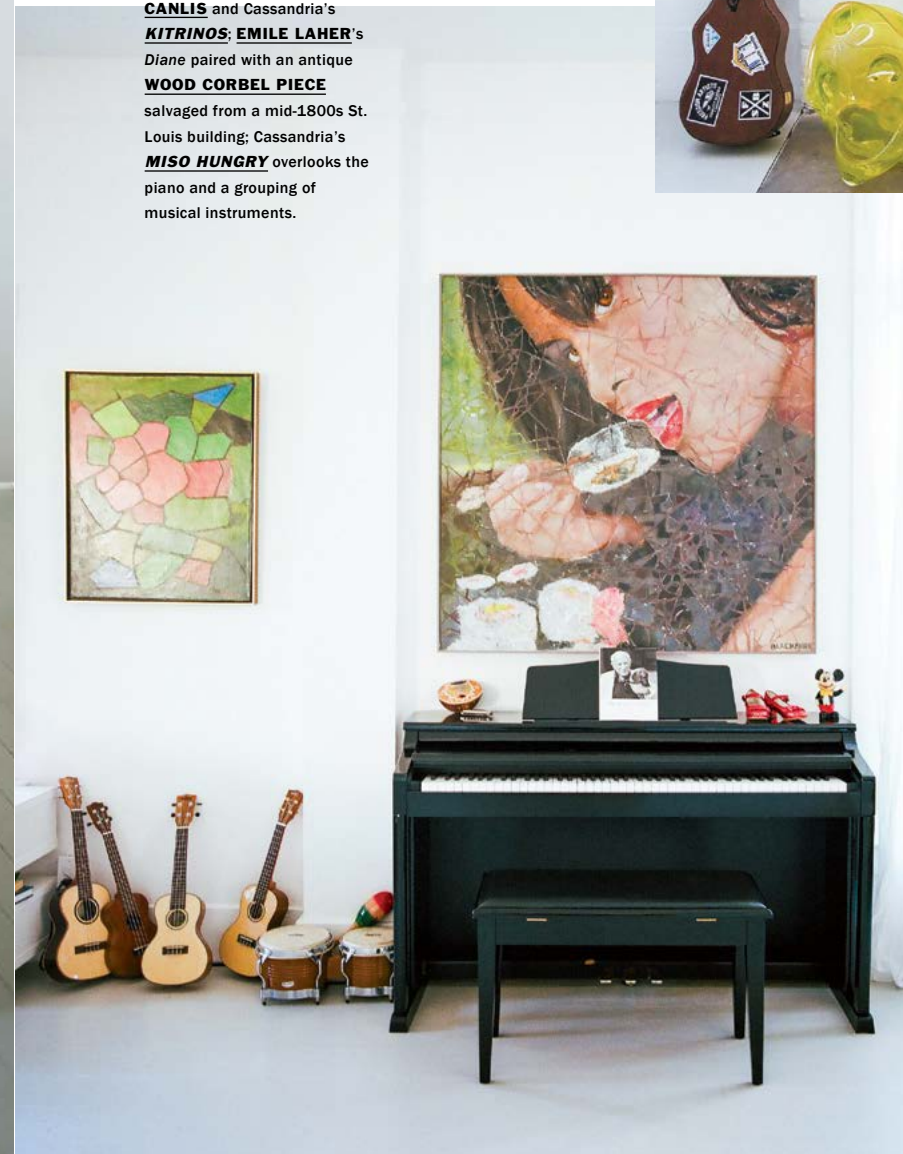


The **KENT MIXON ARCHITECT**-remodeled kitchen flows into the main room, a light-drenched space featuring a generous dining area with several of Cassandra's artworks and a sculpture by **STEVE JENSEN** on the table.

The master bedroom has a **MOROCCAN VIBE** and features Cassandra's **CETO PROSPERINA** over the bed.



Clockwise from top left:  
A glimpse of Cassandra's art studio; the building's original fireplace is a backdrop for a glass sculpture by **J.P. CANLIS** and Cassandra's **KITRINOS**; **EMILE LAHER**'s *Diane* paired with an antique **WOOD CORBEL PIECE** salvaged from a mid-1800s St. Louis building; Cassandra's **MISO HUNGRY** overlooks the piano and a grouping of musical instruments.



Built in 1907, the Blackmores' home combines elements of the mission revival and craftsman styles of architecture emblematic of that time period. Over the years, as the neighborhood developed around it, the building remained largely untouched, a silent witness to Santa Barbara's modernization. Cassandra and Jon were immediately captivated by the structure's expansive spaces with north-facing windows. "The light was golden," she recalls, "I've never been to the South of France, but this is how I imagine the light being." Better yet, the building had plenty of living space with ample room for Cassandra's art studio. And after they started researching the building's history, the Blackmores were convinced it was all meant to be.

The original owners Carolyn and Edwin Gledhill were renowned portrait photographers who used the building as their studio and residence, while the apartment spaces were actual studios inhabited by several well-known artists (Diego Rivera among them, see "Picture Perfect Past," page 175). "From what we've understood, artists have always lived in here," Cassandra says, and it's clear she and Jon consider it their duty to perpetuate their home's legacy as an art haven.

Due to the neglect it received over the years, bringing the structure back to its art-centric existence

*"We are big dreamers... following our passion and our art."* —**CASSANDRIA BLACKMORE**



proved challenging. Luckily, "everything was wrong in the right way," says Jon. The couple did the majority of the restoration

work themselves, and the result is sophisticated and chic, with just the right mix of quirkiness and fine art. It's the type of environment interior designers mine for inspiration.

Cassandra's artwork is a constant but not overpowering presence at Casa Blackmore. "She is world known, but she's a humble person and won't talk about it," says Jon. Indeed, Cassandra's art chops are impressive: She's a respected member of the modern studio glass movement (think Dale Chihuly) by virtue of



**Top to bottom:** Cassandra and daughter Leona; the first floor gallery space with Cassandra's work (collected by numerous national and local collectors, including Christine and Kevin Costner); Cassandra's **COTTON CANDY** above an antique table; Leona and Orion jamming.

her unique twist on *verre églomisé*, a traditional reverse glass painting technique. After completing a glass painting, she shatters it and painstakingly reassembles the pieces like a puzzle. The result has been described as "a sublime landscape of cracks frozen in time."

Humility is also part of Jon's character. When pressed, he will offhandedly admit having always played the drums, but in fact, he's toured and recorded with numerous Seattle bands (bicycle, Anodyne, SuperDeluxe) over the years, and has been drafted to play drums on Blind Melon bassist Brad Smith's next solo project. Add to that his art advisory skills,

*Continued on page 175*



The Blackmore family cruise their West Beach neighborhood in a 1965 **RAMBLER AMBASSADOR** originally sold just one block from their home.

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which emerged when collectors of Cassandra's work would visit her Seattle studio and ask Jon to recommend other artists. Eventually, Jon opened galleries representing other artists, selling their work along with his wife's. He's currently the principal and director of Blackmore Projects, Jon Blackmore Fine Art with galleries in Seattle, San Francisco, Carmel-by-the-Sea, and—by appointment—Santa Barbara.

And there's more to come. As Cassandra says, "We're definitely a creative family all the way." Daughter Leona, 8, is anxious to follow in her mother's footsteps, having already completed half of the 10 paintings she plans to exhibit in her own art show (gummy worms will be provided at the opening). Son Orion, 11, is a born collector; at age 9, his only birthday desire was for vintage books (1920s or older). Although not particularly interested in sports, after being gifted a tennis racket by his parents, Orion managed to confound them by excelling at the sport. Coincidentally, Orion's current bedroom happens to be where Keith Gledhill, the Gledhill's tennis champion son (he won the 1931 NCAA Men's Singles Championship), grew up.

In the end, the Blackmores are living proof that some things in life are truly meant to happen. As Jon says, "I never could have dreamed this up. Let's see, let me find a place that Diego lived in for my wife, that a tennis star lived in for my son, the ocean, the mountains, the environment...I would never even be so bold to even wish for something like this." Adds Cassandra, "But we are big dreamers...following our passion and our art." •

## PICTURE PERFECT PAST

During the early decades of the 20th century, one of the best places to have your portrait taken was the Santa Barbara photography studio of Carolyn and Edwin Gledhill, conveniently located within walking distance of the Potter Hotel, a seaside resort featuring elaborately landscaped grounds, tennis courts, and a zoo. (Destroyed by fire in 1921, the hotel was never rebuilt.)

Celebrities snapped by the Gledhills include screen star Walter Huston (director John's father), writer Upton Sinclair, and Thacher School founder Sherman Day Thacher. The Gledhills also photographed famous artists, among them Diego Rivera, who journeyed to Santa Barbara in 1941 to paint Frances Rich, a sculptor who happened to be renting an art studio from the Gledhills. Rivera used Rich's studio to paint the portrait of Frances, and to paint two self portraits, one of which Rivera inscribed to Rich's mother, screen star Irene Rich.

Cassandra and Jon Blackmore currently own the former Gledhill studio building. L. D. P.

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