

Montecito Masterpiece



ArchitecTours 2015
Saturday, October 3rd
10am-4pm
For Ticket Information:
www.aiasb.com
805-966-4198

A mixture of drought tolerant plants and rock beds in formalist geometric patterns reinforce the modern design.

Photos Courtesy Patrick Turner

By Andrea Cambern

“Hello my name is Andrea, and I’m a Houseaholic....”



Artist Nancy Gifford in the art studio of her Montecito home. Tour goers will get an up close look at the 32’ long multi-media mural she created that will hang in the new UCSB library.

Photo Courtesy Joanne Calitri

If, like me, you are addicted to architecture and interior design here’s an opportunity for a good dose of immersion therapy. Every year the Santa Barbara chapter of the American Institute of Architects hosts ArchitecTours — a celebration of local architecture. This year’s tour features nine homes and businesses, all with a unique story to tell. Including a magnificent modernist retreat in Montecito.

Humble Beginnings

What began decades ago as a small adobe packing shed on a fifty acre lemon farm has evolved into a light filled contemporary compound.

“We knew when we came to Santa Barbara that we wanted a contemporary house,” says homeowner Nancy Gifford. “We just didn’t realize how difficult it would be to find one!” The Giffords looked at more than one hundred houses before deciding this was the one.

“It was a funny house,” she says. “Two bedrooms with a galley kitchen, no laundry and six thousand square feet!”

The couple enlisted the expertise of the home’s original architect Ellen Bildsten of Bildsten Architecture and Planning, and embarked on a two-year renovation. Without changing the footprint they were able to create a floor plan to fit their lifestyle. One that is filled with art.

Today, floor to ceiling windows, stone floors and gallery white walls provide the perfect backdrop for the owners’ extensive contemporary art collection. Everywhere you look there is another treasure. “It’s an art house. And every piece is a Santa Barbara artist,” says Nancy. “We want to support these local artists, they are all our buddies!”



A modernist retreat in the Montecito foothills is one of the homes on the Santa Barbara AIA's upcoming ArchitecTours.



The house is home to an extensive contemporary art collection, inside and out, featuring Santa Barbara artists.

Creative Space

Nancy Gifford is an accomplished artist herself. Which helps explain why this house, in need of such a daunting renovation, didn't deter her. The previous owner was a sculptor who had already enlarged the garage into the most magical studio complete with 16-foot high ceilings! "The first owner was an artist too," says architect Bildsten. "Artists have lived here ever since."

Today the Giffords often open their home for various non-profit events with an emphasis on the arts community. Lovers of architecture and design will no doubt love it, and the other homes and businesses on the Architec-Tours. The don't-miss event (Especially for all of us houseaholics!) helps draw attention to the extraordinary architectural legacy that we are surrounded by here in Santa Barbara.



A pool and terraces were added in the latest incarnation of the adobe packing shed on what once was a 50-acre lemon farm.



Andrea Cambern is an award winning broadcast journalist and columnist based in Santa Barbara. A self-proclaimed "houseaholic" who is addicted to home design and renovation.

Share your story: andrea@TheHouseaholic.com