

doesn't have any public art and you'll know the importance. It's like having a picture on the wall—it adds so much to a city. Look at Portland! I went up there—it was incredible: on every corner there was something absolutely wonderful that made you smile, footsteps going down the sidewalks. San Francisco has great public art, San Diego's doing a fantastic job on their waterfront." Phelps says that nothing is going on with public art in Pasadena anymore. She uses the Civic Auditorium as an example. "Nothing ever moved in there. There was a lot of talk in the paper, people were very upset. Pasadena Heritage demanded that there shouldn't be anything contemporary, because it wasn't in keeping with this city. Which is ridiculous because life goes on."

**MERRY NORRIS** grew up in San Marino. Many people who know her don't know that. She went to high school in San Marino before going off to UC Berkeley.

"San Marino isn't the same now as when I grew up there; the population is different," says the chic Norris as she sits in her sunny living room filled with paintings by the likes of Ed Moses and John Baldessari, sculptures by Peter Shelton, Alison Saar, and Jacob Hashimoto, art books and magazines. "But I know the territory, and it's one of the reasons I've been so involved in the Pasadena Museum of California Art."

Norris was involved with PMCA before it even got started. Architects and friends Steve Johnson and Jim Favaro had asked her advice on a number of things surrounding the project when it was still in its embryonic stages. Then she met Bob Oltman, founder, who asked her to be on the board. She's been on the board for the past eight years. "The Kenny Scharf garage, that's my project," she beams. "I'm very proud of that. I care very deeply about that museum. I have love for California art and it's located

where I grew up—there are a lot of reasons why I love it."

Her love for art began, however, in Montecito. She was married and had three small children, became a docent for the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, and took art lessons. "I didn't think the art I was making was very good compared to the art I was seeing in the galleries," she shrugs. And one day she bought her first piece of art from a formidable dealer who lived around the corner. "It was scary," she says of the transaction. "Because collecting art says a lot about you. And I learned very quickly that there is an 'art world' and you're either in it or you're not."

In 1984, Norris moved to Southern California and friends started asking her about collecting. Out of those queries, she began her art consulting business, which she still runs to this day. And she never stopped collecting art for herself. Her collection waxed and waned, the latter by force (she lost half in a divorce) and from her generosity: she's donated pieces to the Santa Barbara museum and MOCA.

Norris was a key player in creating MOCA downtown. "At the time I was one of five collectors in the city of Los Angeles," she laughs. The city asked them to raise \$10 million in less than a year, just to prove that the community wanted a museum dedicated to contemporary art. "That's when I turned into a fundraiser," she smiles. "Can you imagine? I was brought up to never ask for anything, and here I was asking for huge amounts of money. We raised \$13.5 million."

Since 1987, Norris has been on the board of SCI-Arc (Southern California Institute of Architecture). "I'm the only girl on the board. I love it. I am so enamored with SCI-Arc. It's an incredibly challenging creative environment. It's a huge part of my life." In the eighties she served as president of the Cultural Affairs Commission for the city of Los Angeles. For

fourteen years she served as a public member on the board of the AIA/L.A. (American Institute of Architects, Los Angeles Chapter).

About eight or nine years ago she branched out into public art. Norris has done two public art projects in Pasadena, the Del Mar Station and the Western Asset Plaza. She's also responsible for placing Peter Shire's public exhibit on the Third Street Promenade, in Santa Monica, and adding a permanent sculpture to the Andaz Hotel facade (metal kites by Jacob Hashimoto). Recent projects include tapping internationally renowned sculptor Franz West

for the new William Morris-Endeavor building in Beverly Hills and working on getting Shepard Fairey for the West Hollywood Library. Her current pet project is A.R.T.I.C., the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center, which is in the beginning stages. Each of these projects take years to complete.

"I have to be asked to dance," says Norris of her involvement in public art. "But I go for the gold, and you can quote me on that. It's got to be really good because so many people are subjected to these installations. It's not shock and awe, but maybe wonder and awe."



**MERRY NORRIS**