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Art + Practice Co-Founder Eileen Harris Norton Gives Her Art-Filled Home a Refresh

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on Nov 13, 2018 • 4:10 am

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Eileen Harris Norton at home with works by Alma Thomas and Kara Walker.

OVER THE FIREPLACE, an Alma Thomas (1891-1978) painting shares the mantel with a small sculpture by Kara Walker. Elsewhere in the home a Kerry James Marshall work hangs adjacent to a Glenn Ligon neon that reads “negro sunshine.” The November issue of Architectural Digest (AD) offers [a look inside](#) the Los Angeles home of philanthropist **Eileen Harris Norton**. Nearly two decades ago, she traded a high-ceiling contemporary for a 1905 Craftsman in Santa Monica. She recently reimagined the interior which showcases her extensive art collection.

Norton has been collecting since the 1980s with an emphasis on African American artists, women artists, and Southern California artists. Her holdings are largely contemporary and include Walker, Ligon, Chris Ofili, and Los Angeles artists Rodney McMillian and Mark Bradford, with whom she co-founded [Art + Practice](#) (A+P), along with his partner, social activist Allan DiCastro. She met Bradford in 2000 when she visited his studio.

“Mark was still working as a hair dresser then, and I remember him telling me my hair wasn’t cute, so I started going to his salon. We’ve been friends ever since,” Norton told AD. They bonded over hair and soon found they had a shared interest in more weighty issues.

“Mark was still working as a hair dresser then, and I remember him telling me my hair wasn’t cute, so I started going to his salon. We’ve been friends ever since.” — Eileen Harris Norton

Located in Leimert Park, A+P has a dual mission providing services for foster children alongside visual arts programming. “It’s a way of using art to open up a world of creativity and empowerment,” she said. [Currently on view](#) at A+P, photographs by Keith Calhoun and Chandra McCormick document black men incarcerated at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola and draw connections between slavery and mass incarceration.



Works by Kerry James Marshall (left) and Glenn Ligon (neon).

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AT HOME, NORTON IS SHIFTING HER FOCUS. "I'm mostly collecting the work of artists from the generation before Mark Bradford—people like Alma Thomas, Frank Bowling, and Raymond Saunders," she said. "They provide a bit of context and historical perspective."

Meanwhile, a double portrait on felt by Lorna Simpson hangs in a room designed as a gallery space with black sculptural vases by McMillian on display nearby. A specially commissioned fish sculpture by Frank Gehry floats above the staircase. A few rooms feature works by Japanese artists Yoshitomo Nara (living room, master bath) and Takashi Murakami (master bedroom, master bath). Doubling a candlestick holders, a series of Murano glass Moor figures by Fred Wilson populates the dining room table.

Norton worked with Nell Alano on the refresh. The goal was to embrace color and the designer forged ahead on that front, brightening things up with boldly hued furnishings and, in the master bedroom, pink walls. When it came to the art and how it was integrated into the decor, that was another matter. Alano said: "That's 100 percent Eileen." **CT**

IMAGES: All photos by Stephen Kent Johnson for Architectural Digest

FIND MORE about Eileen Harris Norton's home and art [in Architectural Digest](#)

BOOKSHELF

Over the years, Lorna Simpson has made many portraits inspired by images of women found in vintage editions of Ebony and Jet magazine. The recently released volume [Lorna Simpson Collages](#) compiles and celebrates the works. "[Glenn Ligon: AMERICA](#)" documented the artist's 25-year survey exhibition, which was organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Complementing the exhibition organized by the Tang Teaching Museum and Studio Museum in Harlem, "[Alma Thomas](#)" features more than 125 vibrant, colorful paintings and works on paper, many published for the first time, a preface by Thelma Golden, scholarly essays, and responses to Thomas's work by four contemporary artists.



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