

[DESIGN]
HOME



WHITE NOISE
The media room is minimal with a comfy white sectional sofa and a riveting series of framed color photographs of an installation by the Gao Brothers of Beijing, depicting a gigantic mural of a stern Chairman Mao being torn into pieces.

HIGH ART

TOP GALLERIST DEBORAH COLTON, CHAIRING THIS MONTH'S FINE ARTS FAIR, FILLS HER SKY-HIGH HOME AT THE HOUSTONIAN WITH ASIAN ARTIFACTS—AND CONTEMPORARY TREASURES FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

By Chris Kelly
Photography by Jill Hunter

How *does* she do it?

Deborah Colton is constantly brimming with infectious enthusiasm despite her demanding schedule—which includes running her international contemporary arts gallery (Deborah Colton Gallery, 2445 North Blvd., 713.869.5151); mentoring emerging artists from around the world; mounting exhibitions such as the one that kicks off this month featuring works of artists from Egypt, Istanbul and Iraq; and chairing the 2014 Houston Fine Arts Fair, which also opens this month. The answer is revealed the moment you step into Colton's airy, light-filled, roughly 3,500-square-foot condo at The Houstonian Estates high-rise, where Asian antiques are mixed with contemporary art against a backdrop of lush treetop views through banks of floor-to-ceiling windows on both sides.

"My home is serene, peaceful and meditative," Colton, 58, softly smiles as she looks around. "It is a place to be focused and grounded."

Colton selected to go "very minimal in terms of furnishings," and her den simply sports a comfortable, overstuffed sectional sofa with a glass-topped coffee table and two wooden antique Chinese chairs that, like many of her other very rare Asian pieces, "don't exist anymore," Colton says. "I bought my Asian antiques in old markets and cool places in China, Thailand and Japan, but now they're gone, all bought up."

In one corner is an ancient bronze Buddha from CONTINUED...



POWER POINT

Clockwise from top: Mickey Smith's text-savvy "POWER" piece in the den; a guest room's collection of portraits including Jonas Mekas' stills of Andy Warhol and Salvador Dali, and Stephen Torton's shots of Madonna and Jean Michel Basquiat; a portrait by Oleg Dou and a Vietnamese urn, also in the den.



...CONTINUED Thailand that Colton was "allowed to take out of the country" because she was working with the official art curator for the king of Thailand and also mentoring Thai artists. This was during an eight-year stretch in the '90s when she and her family lived in Tokyo and then Bangkok. Her husband, Bill, 61, is an ExxonMobile exec, and his work took him and the clan—including daughter Susan, now 29, and daughter Lizzie, now 21—to the exotic locales. Deborah relished traveling throughout Asia, serving as a patron to local artists and creating portfolios for them that she presented to galleries in Japan and New York.

When Bill's work brought the Coltons to Houston in 2000, opening a gallery here was a natural next step for Deborah. And, although she had roots on the East Coast, having been raised in New Jersey, and knew that her

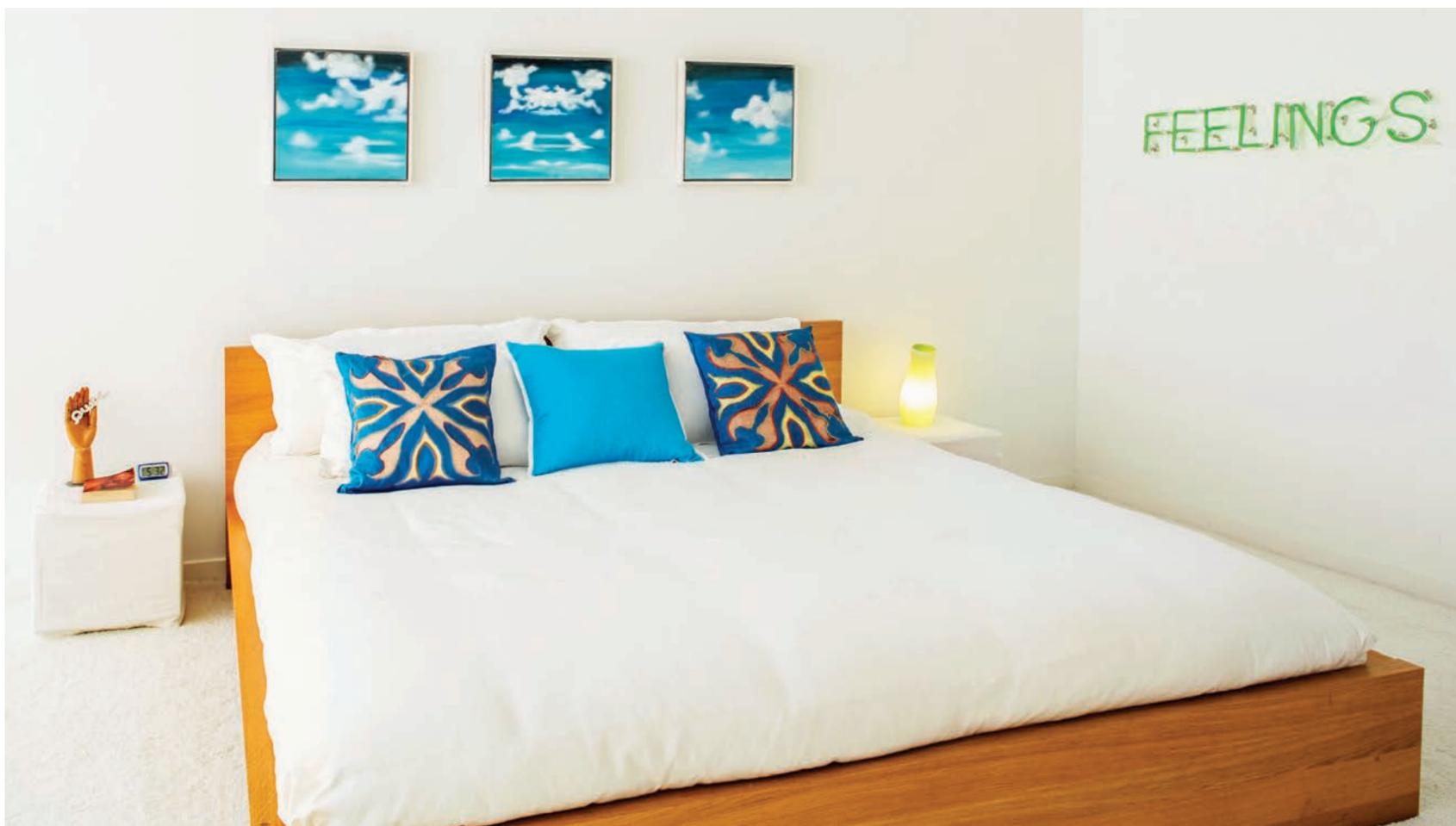
husband might be transferred again, she loved Houston and considered it "home base."

Her gallery's commitment to "the expansion of the diversity of international artists and concerns" is played out at home, where treasures from her years in Asia mingle with modern pieces from around the world.

In her den hangs a painted and digitally enhanced black-and-white photograph of a young woman's face with haunting and soulful eyes, by the Russian artist Oleg Dou. Underneath that rests an enormous, glistening aquamarine ceramic urn from Vietnam.

A colorful and evocative photograph of an installation by Chinese artist Han Bing, which depicts him resting on a canopy bed as representative images of the rapid changes in China swirl around him, is positioned over an iron bench on another wall. A CONTINUED...





“My husband and I have always believed that if you can dream it, you can achieve it,” says Deborah Colton.



HEAD IN THE CLOUDS
Clockwise from top: Blue-sky paintings by Warhol favorite Ultra Violet in the ethereal master bedroom; American artist Paul Jacobsen's fantastical landscape, also in the master; gallerist Colton.

...CONTINUED big framed mixed-media piece by New Zealand-based American artist Mickey Smith faces the sofa; the word *POWER* is boldly printed three times across folds of pale green grass cloth. Says Deborah, studying the piece, “My husband and I have always believed that if you can dream it, you can achieve it.”

They even had to achieve an long-distance, commuter marriage, as Bill was indeed eventually transferred to Dallas. (A licensed pilot, Bill flies his Cessna home every weekend to see his beloved. “It’s romantic,” she says.) So, basically living a single lady’s life during the week, Deborah decided to turn the dining room area that opens to the den into a cozy media room. “I do almost all of my entertaining at the gallery,” says Deborah, “I don’t need a dining room.”

The minimal media room features a series of photos by the Gao Brothers of Beijing, depicting a mural of Chairman Mao being torn to bits. The controversial Gao Brothers often work in secrecy and so far have managed to stay one step ahead of the censors in China, even

though much of their art is aimed at criticizing the government, Deborah points out.

On the other side of the condo, hardwood floors flow into the master bedroom’s thick, white soft carpet. Deborah recommends that everyone enter the master bedroom with bare feet to get the full sensory experience. Above a king-size platform bed swathed in white linen hang three ethereal blue-and-white sky paintings by Warhol superstar Ultra Violet. And to the left on the same wall is a joyful neon rainbow, also by Violet. Deborah says that her master bedroom “gives you the feeling you are now in the clouds.”

The paradise-found theme extends to another piece in the bedroom, with a fantastical work across from the bed depicting a nude woman relaxing in a magical mountainous landscape with a lake, a rainbow and dancing bears, by American artist Paul Jacobsen. Like the high-rise condo itself, a unique retreat for a globe-trotting purveyor of art, Deborah declares that the piece “takes you to a place of Utopia.” ■