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Continental Divide

With its roots in Elizabethan England and an enchanting view of More Mesa comes a Hope Ranch home that embraces a couple's artful treasures



HAIR AND MAKEUP BY MEGHAN MCCLAIN. ARTMIXBEAUTY.COM/DERMOLOGICA

by **KATHERINE STEWART** photographs by **LISA ROMEREIN**



OPPOSITE: The formal dining room reflects the Hughes's distinctive taste with its sublime lighting and French floor tiles. PREVIOUS PAGES, LEFT TO RIGHT: An Italian chest and a French chandelier accent the foyer, along with an oil by the late Oak Group artist Glenna Hartmann. Also gracing the foyer: Tammy in repose.

Kim Hughes is a man with a past—an abundant, multifaceted, epic past that stretches backward through the centuries. Luminosa, the extraordinary home that he and his wife, Tammy, have built in Hope Ranch, is an homage to this past. A 7,700-square-foot trove of eclectic historical objects, works of art, and architectural salvage, it is a spectacular fusion of history and whimsy.

Behind every new home, it seems there is another, older home that it aspires to emulate, or perhaps to surpass. In this instance, that home is Barton Abbey, a storied pile of golden stone near Oxford, England, that dates from the 15th century. Barton Abbey is Kim's ancestral seat, and it remains in the family. He speaks fondly of the summers he spent there as a child with his grandparents and "Uncle Ian"—as in Ian Fleming, the writer. "Barton Abbey was exquisitely proportioned Elizabethan architecture, with a deep arched entry, columned porch, steep spired roofs, two-story bay windows topped with balustrades, and a slate roof, which contrasts with red-brick chimneys and the hypnotic sounds from a clock tower above the stables," Kim recalls. "All very memorable to an impressionable youngster."

Kim's mother was a nurse with the Royal Navy. She met his father, an American marine, during World War II, and the couple left England when Kim was 5. As a young man in the 1960s, Kim developed a keen interest in art. Indeed, he first came to Santa Barbara to study at Brooks Institute of Photography. He had an appreciation for composition, light and shadow, the subtlety of color, and a love of all things enhanced by the passage of time. But the first painting that made his heart race was not hanging in a museum. It was an unsigned watercolor circa early 20th century, a portrait of a woman in the forest. He found it in the back of a dimly lit, cobweb-filled gallery on a London mews, hiding among the stacks of unframed works. "It was electrifying," he says. His rummager's instinct awakened—he began spending hours with art dealers and in antique shops, looking to make that special connection with the past.

Kim's father was stationed at Camp Pendleton, just north of Oceanside, which gave rise to Kim's other great passion: surfing. He and Tammy share a love of the sport and often spend their weekends riding waves at Hollister Ranch or more exotic locales. The couple has four children between them—ranging in age from 7 to 30—and the family recently returned from two months in Nicaragua, where they have a home on the beach. "There's such a simplicity about being in a country like that, it boils life down to the basics," says Tammy. "We derive so much happiness from the natural beauty." And of course, there is the surf. "Kim likes big, crazy stuff," says Tammy. "I stick with the shin slappers!"

As you approach Luminosa, the thick walls and artful stonework bring to mind an Italianate palazzo. In contrast with the weighty exterior, Tammy is a beam of light, radiating warmth and creativity. A Lompoc-born interior decorator with an evident instinct for style, she likes to mix vintage items of clothing, such as Ossie Clark evening gowns and deco-era beaded handbags, with contemporary designer finds such as Missoni and Chanel. She also shares Kim's penchant for collecting antiques and historical artifacts. "I love

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Warmth and ease set the tone in the master bedroom, which claims an antique bed from a San Ysidro Ranch cottage and a hand-stenciled ceiling. OPPOSITE: The media room, in contrast, exudes sensory stimulation, its cutting-edge sound system designed by Chris Pelonis and festive ruched ceiling expertly stitched by the Tent Merchant.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Tammy's home design office; the couple enjoy a spread at their Danish dining table; leaded glass cabinets and French bar stools of solid copper dress up the kitchen. OPPOSITE: Treasures from Kim and Tammy's travels adorn their 7-year-old son's room, including the Danish antique bed and the playful lighting strip from an old carousel.

taking old things into a new house and giving them a second life," she says. "When you bring them back into the world and give them a little love, they can give you a great deal of happiness." Kim and Tammy have put their talents to work to develop real estate. "We only build or restore in places where we want to spend time ourselves," says Tammy. That includes the Santa Barbara area as well as Vail, Fiji, and Nicaragua.

Step inside Luminosa and you feel like you've entered an English manor—not in the fussy, perfectly ordered way of the bourgeois imagination, but in the way of families who have walked the same halls for centuries. There is a 20-foot-tall window with red velvet curtains rescued from an old Hollywood set-design warehouse. A one-of-a-kind chest of drawers with elaborate wooden inlay was nabbed at auction in Belgium. Many of the objects come from the great flea markets of the world: London's Portobello Road, the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, and Les Puces de Saint-Ouen in Paris—"the Disneyland of architectural salvage," says Tammy. There is a dash of Santa Barbara





Stately stone columns and a check-board of vintage tiles from Nicaragua line the outside lounge area. OPPOSITE: "This is where we live," says Tammy of their patio hearth with its Italian-style grill. "We make a big fire and throw on veggies and fish. Then the kids make s'mores while we relax and drink wine—what we do best!"





A family favorite: the oak-shaded, al fresco dining spot. OPPOSITE: Tammy takes in the view from the back gate, a find from Belgium.

Location courtesy of Image Locations, image-locations.com.

in the mix, too. The stenciled ceiling in the master bedroom takes its inspiration from those of the Lobero and Arlington theaters.

The house is filled with whimsical touches. Old bas-reliefs are built into the kitchen ceiling. Mexican handcarved wooden finials in the shape of various saints perch atop a rectangular ledge over the cooking area. Tented in red and gold striped fabric, the media room combines a state-of-the-art sound system with a Venetian carnival aesthetic, complete with Picasso harlequin and Bergamo masks. In the master bedroom, a heavy Belgian antique armoire opens onto a secret entrance to Tammy’s well-stocked dressing room. Each bathroom is a story unto itself. One is lined floor-to-ceiling with Kim’s family tartan plaid fabric. Another boasts an antique English commode, the kind with the tank high overhead and a pull-chain. Most of the bathtubs are claw-footed beauties.

Tammy describes the overarching style of the home as “no safe country,” with a

laugh. Indeed, the aesthetic is decidedly askew. The Lu Cong portrait of a young girl that presides in the entryway has an uneasy grace. Her gaze crosses the foyer to the painting of a young, aristocratic lad holding a soggy kitten in his lap. Now, how did that kitty get wet?

It took 12 years to bring it all together—six to obtain permits and another six for design and construction, and to install a lifetime of collections. This mysterious setting has become a gathering place for friends and family. Every year, they host a holiday feast; each guest prepares his or her favorite side dish. “We have friends from all over the world,” says Kim, “so there is an unbelievable variety of cuisines.”

Both Tammy and Kim also enjoy gardening. She favors flowers; he likes exotic fruit—mangoes, tropical cherries, sapotes. They also cultivate organic vegetables and have a pond on the property that they stock with catfish, tilapia, and large-mouth bass for their own consumption. The garden is as iconoclastic as the house: About one quarter is formal, and three quarters wild. “Just like us!” Tammy quips.

Situated on the edge of More Mesa, the property offers ample views of the mountains and the ocean. In the evenings, from second-story balconies, one sees the twinkling lights of Goleta. Every night at sunset, Tammy opens the wrought-iron gate in the backyard and follows the trail through More Mesa to the beach. There she can watch the skies blaze with color as her sons frolic in the water. “It feels very wild, very ‘National Geographic’ here,” she says. “It’s just a little slice of magic.” ■

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