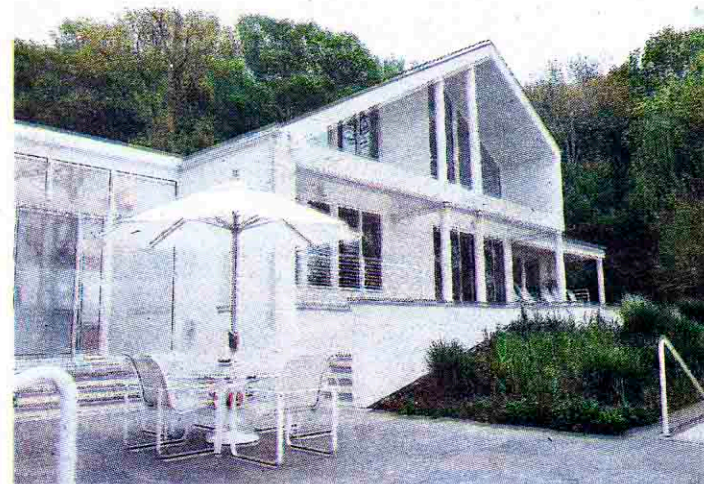


# home

## Art is in the house

In Mill Neck, a dealer's home is her gallery



Mukabaa Marksohn's DM Contemporary has two art shows a year in Mill Neck.

### LOOK, LOOK, LOOK . . .

**Doris Mukabaa Marksohn** has what she calls a three-step program for those who are uncertain about buying art, finding something appropriate for their homes or wondering if they'll still like a piece years down the road.

**Step One:** Look. See as much as you can, not just in one gallery but elsewhere. The more you see, the closer you will come to finding what you like.

**Step Two:** Look. As you look at more, your eye becomes educated, you don't linger on those things you don't care for.

**Step Three:** Look. You get the idea.

Whether you'll still love the piece years down the road, "No one can answer that," Mukabaa Marksohn says. She suggests that beginning collectors be prepared to make an occasional mistake along the way. For practical questions such as, "Will my spouse like this as much as I do?" or "Will it fit in that spot over the sofa?" Mukabaa Marksohn suggests telling the dealer you like the piece but need some time. Ask for the right of first refusal, should anyone else express interest in buying.

If you are enthusiastic about the work of a particular artist, ask to see what else the dealer has by the same individual, in other media or sizes. "No artist I know always works the same scale every time."

Mukabaa Marksohn advises against what she calls "purely decorative buying" — buying something because it fits a particular spot or color scheme. "Buy because you love something, but be prepared to rearrange things at home to make it work," she says.

— DAN VAN BENTHUYSEN

BY DAN VAN BENTHUYSEN  
Special to Newsday

In the comfortable elegance of airy, sun-filled rooms in her contemporary waterfront home in Mill Neck, Doris Mukabaa Marksohn, 51, is celebrating the fourth anniversary of her art gallery. A gallery, it turns out, that she runs in these very rooms.

Her gallery, DM Contemporary, is a private art dealership, meaning visits are by appointment only. Her home would not be easy to find along the winding roads and gated estates in the tony village. Mill Neck has no commercial area.

Instead, Mukabaa Marksohn prefers to speak to the curious by phone first and schedule an appointment, for which she will provide some fairly easy-to-follow directions. Appointments mean she can take the time to get to know a visitor and develop a rapport.

But her gallery and artists are so unconventional — even within the unconventional business of selling contemporary art — that, as she explains, "I've had to make up the rules myself as I go along."

"At first, I tried to do two shows each spring and two shows each fall, but it was too much," she says. "Now I just do one show in the spring and one show in the fall. And I do art fairs in New York and Miami."

In only four years, Mukabaa Marksohn has quietly, but steadily, built a following of collectors around a stable of 23 carefully chosen and remarkably consistent artists who together may represent some of the most solid aesthetic work to be found on the contemporary scene today. And



NEWSDAY PHOTOS / THOMAS A. FERRARA



this is all housed in an unlikely but welcoming home in the long shadow of the Manhattan art scene.

Perhaps the most impressive measure of her success is that a number of her clients include museum curators and curators from commercial galleries, buying for their own collec-

tions.

"When we started, we had a mailing list of 300 people," says Mukabaa Marksohn, adding that she does not need a municipal permit since she operates privately by appointment only and thus does not run a public space. "Now we're at 1,600 and still growing. In

the next year or so, we're looking at opening a gallery in Dubai."

The story of her personal journey to this career is as unusual as finding one of the region's best contemporary art galleries in the village of Mill Neck.

Doris Mukabaa grew up in Beirut, the daughter of a bookstore owner whose offerings included art periodicals from around the world. "That bookstore was my window into what else lay beyond Beirut," she says.

She received her bachelor's in fine arts from the Lebanese American University (called Beirut University College at the time). She did murals and set designs for Gilbert and Sullivan productions in Beirut. She illustrated five children's books for the Oxford University Press.

She came to New York to do graduate studies at the Pratt Institute. After Pratt, she worked with an art consultant whose clients included the corporate art collections of Tishman and Bristol-Myers.

Along the way, she watched from afar the gut-wrenching effects of war in her homeland: Exchange rates at one point plummeted precipitously, leaving her virtually penniless. Air travel home was cut off for years at a time.

Through it all, she says, she worried most about the surviv-



al of her parents in Beirut.

But before she could return to Lebanon, she fell in love with Jerry Marksohn, now an executive with his family-owned We Trans-

port / Towne Bus Corp. on Long Island.

"So this Lebanese-Palestinian married a Long Island

Jew!" she says, throwing her hands in the air with a shrug. After marriage, she and her husband were able to bring her parents to New York.

"So many people come to America from so many backgrounds and cultures, but they assimilate, and it seems Americans don't absorb a great deal

from these other cultures in the process." Indeed, her unusual cultural perspective has informed her life and her passion for art.

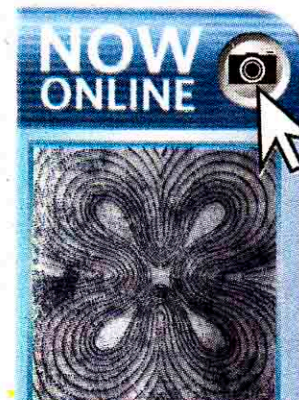
After giving birth to a son in 1991, she became involved in the operation of the Dolan Center Art Gallery at Friends Academy in Locust Valley,

eventually being asked to curate a show there. "That's when I was bitten by the bug," she says. "That's when I knew I wanted to be an art dealer."

Over time, she developed what she still refers to as "our program," which includes



**PETS**  
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B23



You don't need an appointment to view our slide show of DM Contemporary's latest gallery show.

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### SOME TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

For a novice collector, Doris Mukabaa Marksohn advises, "Look at a lot of art. Keep looking until you begin to see things that speak to you."

For beginning collectors, she has a number of unique pieces priced at less than \$1,000.

"Art is a universal language that crosses all borders," she says. "Our program is not to operate a gallery so much as a contemporary salon like the 19th century French salons, where there is dialogue about culture."

— DAN VAN BENTHUYSEN

Doris Mukabaa Marksohn, left, runs DM Contemporary, a private art dealership, out of her home in Mill Neck. Pieces from various artists are shown on rotation in rooms and hallways in the house. Mukabaa Marksohn speaks to interested buyers over the phone and guests, below, must make an appointment to visit the gallery.

See ART on B19





NEWSDAY PHOTO / THOMAS A. TERRARA

Doris Mukabaa Marksohn's client list has grown from 300 to 1,600 and includes curators from museums and commercial galleries.

# Art is in the house

## ART from B15

seasonal exhibits with openings that bring 150 to 175 people to her home and gallery. She also hosts artist talks for up to 25 guests on occasional evenings.

"I've always worked where I lived," she says. "But this is the first time I have worked and lived in what is essentially a public space. It's not always easy. My son has his own room and space in the house, but there are times when it's not convenient to have friends over. For example, if I'm showing collectors some new work. And my mother lives with us as well."

Her home includes rooms, hallways and an entrance that all show off to great advantage a rotation of work by the various artists against white walls, blond unstained maple flooring and generous lighting from north-facing windows. The home was already owned by Marksohn when they married and was enlarged when Vincent, now 17, was born.

It is no accident that the artists she represents come from everywhere. She has shown work by artists from Venezuela, Turkey, Great Britain, Japan, South Korea, Switzerland and Tunisia.

Tamiko Kawata, who was born, raised and attended college in Japan and now lives and works in New York City, creates fascinating geometric constructions that, the viewer finds on close examination, are made from hundreds of safety pins.

But Mukabaa Marksohn's artists also include her husband, Jerry, a

photographer whose large-format abstract color prints examine the textures of aging paint surfaces in a group called "The Boatyard Series."

Mukabaa Marksohn clearly has a preference for artists who create unexpected compositions from mundane materials. In addition to the safety pins, Kawata also "paints" with rubber bands embedded in the canvases.

Luis Castro of New York City and Lita Kelmenson of Jericho create unusual objects with wood. City artist Barbara Andrus works with the tension of bent twigs and thread to create pieces that will evoke the better-known work of Andy Goldsworthy, who lives in the city. City resident Mary Judge stencils through pricked hole patterns onto surfaces in a technique called pouncing, which originated in the renaissance, when fresco painters transferred drawings onto wall surfaces.

An endless flow of unsolicited submissions from new artists is reviewed on a continuous basis. Mukabaa Marksohn points to two jam-packed file boxes representing resumes and images from many artists she does not yet represent but wants "to keep an eye on as they develop."

All of those she represents are mid-career or emerging artists with credentials that include grants, residencies and commissions. Many are already represented in significant collections.

"I look for work done from the soul," she says of the artists she has chosen.