



**THE PETER PRINCIPALS** From left: Key players from the gallery's 15 year history include artists Donnie Molls, Tony DeLap, Chris Gwaltney and Jorg Dubin, owner Peter Blake (in black), and artists Jennifer Shaw, Jeff Peters and Jimi Gleason.

Gradually, he added painters Tom Wudl, Astrid Preston and Dennis Hare and, due in part to fortuitous collaborations with the Louver Gallery and other L.A. venues, stars like Peter Alexander, Chuck Arnoldi, Peter Lodato, Peter Shelton, Tony Berlant, Robert Graham and Llyn Foulkes, along with Joe Goode, Ed Moses, David Lloyd—the list goes on. Widely acclaimed Orange County artists like Tony DeLap, Paul Darrow, Jorg Dubin and more recently Jimi Gleason and Jennifer Shaw (whose first show in February sold out) have helped to build bridges between O.C. and L.A. “I got Los Angeles people interested in coming to and showing in Orange County,” says Blake.

As his reputation grew, he established close relations with Laguna Art Museum. “I thought right away that Peter had the right approach to opening and running a contemporary art gallery in Orange County,” says LAM’s director Bolton Coburn. “I have been impressed by his diligence in creating a market in Orange County, among people who could easily buy in Los Angeles or New York. But, thanks to his hard work with clients and other dealers, he has kept buyers here.”

“Peter is the reason why North Laguna’s gallery row has developed into a destination for art patrons interested in building a serious, sophisticated art collection,” says neighbor Susan Greenwood (Susan Greenwood Fine Art). “I believe that the core reason for his stellar success and longevity is his impeccable talent for curating cutting-edge exhibitions and raising the integrity level for art in Orange County.”

Clients like Diane Martin, who has built a significant collection of California artists, have counted on Blake’s advice from the very beginning. “With Peter, you always know where you stand. He’s very honest, has a lot of integrity and is very direct, which can be a little overwhelming at times,” she says. Martin first bought an Ed Moses that she had seen on a postcard and simply had to have, she says.

Mitchell and Linda Scott-Katz have collected art for 25 years, much of it bought from Blake. They recall how they tried to buy an Astrid Preston painting but were not sure whether it would be a fit. Blake let them take it home to try it out and, after two weeks, they were still able to return it.

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***Blake doesn't suffer fools, or anyone trying to foist off mediocre art, gladly. If an artist tries to give him work he considers second-rate, the show is off—and so is the relationship.***