

Text by Susan Hodara | Photography by John O'Donnell

Esmeralda Santiago

THE ACCLAIMED AUTHOR, WHO LIVES IN A 6,000-SQUARE-FOOT COUNTRY RANCH IN KATONAH WITH HER HUSBAND, FILM-MAKER FRANK CANTOR, SHARES HER FAVORITE THINGS.

Amethyst Energy

This 20-inch-tall amethyst geode, aglow with glittering violet, was a gift from Cantor. "We love amethyst. It has qualities that we value, like being open-minded to the universe, and it brings positive energy into the room."

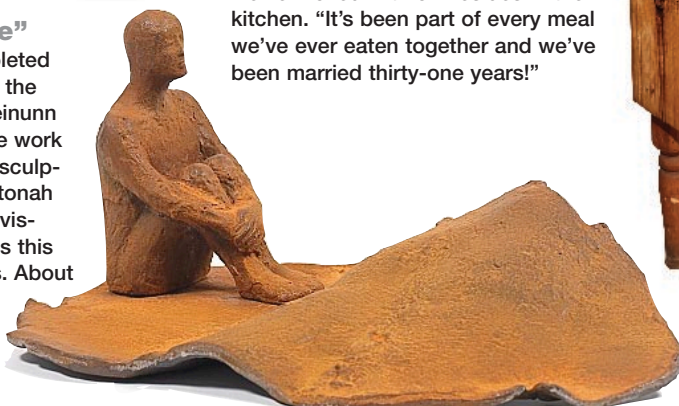


Hot Potato In "Slow-Roasted Love," an essay published in 2000 in *Home & Garden*, Santiago wrote: "... I'm superstitious enough to endow objects with magical properties." She was writing about her Thomas Potato Roaster, a wedding gift hand-carried from Germany. Made of clay, the roaster soon became the source of weekly servings of mouthwatering potatoes. After decades of use and more than a few hairline cracks, it now rests on a dining-room shelf. "It's very light and fragile. I try not to use it too much anymore."



In the "Distance"

In 2008, Cantor completed a documentary about the Icelandic sculptor Steinunn Thórarinsdóttir, whose work was on exhibit in the sculpture garden at the Katonah Museum of Art. "She visited us and brought us this piece," Santiago says. About 40 inches across, the cast-iron sculpture is titled "Distance."



The Writing Life

For the last 10 years, Santiago has done much of her writing on this pine and maple writing desk, built for her by Cantor and their son, Lucas. The desk is slanted at the perfect height and angle for her to rest her forearms as she writes.

Saintly Memories

Santiago acquired this foot-tall santo, a wooden figure of a saint, on one of her trips to Puerto Rico. It stands on a bathroom ledge amidst an assortment of figurines collected in the course of her travels. The santo was hand-carved by locals who use such icons to create altars in their homes. "They may carve the Virgin Mary or the patron saint of their town. I don't know who this one is, but it's part of the tradition of my culture."



Rock Solid This solid end grain dove-tailed maple butcher block, about 20 inches thick, was bought by Cantor for \$35 at an auction in Vermont. "He owned it when we first met. We've taken it everywhere we've moved." It now resides in the kitchen. "It's been part of every meal we've ever eaten together and we've been married thirty-one years!"



