

A "Stable" of Artists at the Principi Art Barn

By Debbie Tuma

What happens when you put 19 artists into a gigantic space that was formerly a horse stable? You get a wonderful, rustic, perfect and distinctive art gallery that is unlike any other in the Hamptons.

The Principi Art Barn, as it is called, is in the middle of their third exhibit in this magnificent space, which sits in the midst of majestic green fields off Route 27 in Amagansett, just east of the Amagansett IGA. The complete transformation of the stable into 15 different "gallery spaces," culled from 15 horse stalls, is amazing and must be experienced. Who would think to spend a day strolling from one end of this several hundred feet-long barn to the other, seeing 19 totally different and hugely talented artists in each space, under one (long) roof? Prepare to spend several hours strolling into each rough-hewn wooden cubicle to take in every medium from giant abstract oils to tiny realistic paintings, to nature scenes of beaches, boats and flowers, to woods and sunsets, to animal prints, to celebrity art, to giant wood sculptures, to carved stones and shell jewelry.

The owner of this fascinating "art barn," Yvonne Principi, opened the gallery in July. As a real estate broker, she formerly put together art shows for Prudential Douglas Elliman's Amagansett office.

"I noticed there was a two-year wait for artists, with so much talent out here in the Hamptons, and not enough space to show all the work," she said. "That's when I got the idea to open this barn as a gallery, where I could show lots of artists at one time." Principi can allot one "stall" per artist, or divide each space. She has decided to hang each show for 30 days, giving time for artists to show their work to full advantage.

Included on these many varied, natural wood walls, are the works of local artists. Beryl Bernay of Springs has amazing travel photos of Bali and large abstract paintings. There are two giant celebrity works by East Hampton artist Michael Knigin; "Guns and Roses" photographs by artist Eileen Hickey-Hulme, enhanced by nail polish. There are wonderful zebra paintings and South American-inspired pieces by Amanda Bellino, a native of Peru who resides in East Quogue. In another stall is a collection of paintings inspired by Amagansett artist Frank Rocanova's visits to Nicaragua, where he has helped start an art school for children. Rocanova has also hung several of his famous martini and other photos from his days as an advertising photographer.

Dalton Portella, well known as a musician with "The Bastards of Boom," has hung some of his large nature photos on the walls of one stall, which include a swim of dolphins.

There is one stall where the art fits perfectly - which is the well known Hamptons Classic sketches of horses and their riders, by artist Bonni Miller, of Montauk and Paris. She has a roomful of her whimsical equestrian art, which is right at home in this "art barn."

Other Montauk artists represented include Benita Glorioso, with her lovely Montauk daisy paintings, natural landscapes of Montauk beaches, and beach scenes from her native Philippines. She is new to painting, after having developed a reputation for her many creative stores throughout the East End, Glorioso's. More of her work can be seen in her current store location at Gurney's Inn Resort in Montauk.

Christine Morton and Deborah Kennedy, both from Montauk, are showing stunning photo works. Clayton Calvert is an emerging artist who has a few large oils in the gallery, and Mary Laspia, of East Hampton, has painted some amazing trees in different lighting scenarios that truly capture the imagination. Cynthia Loewen, the wife of East Hampton Councilman Brad Loewen, has created some beautiful ocean scenes, still lifes and shell jewelry. Two interesting sculptures to take note of are a gorgeous, organic-form wood piece by Scott Partlow, and metal asparagus by James DeMartis, comically dubbed "Asparagus Beach."

Yvonne Principi explained that she hopes to create a cultural center at her art barn, which could include art lessons by well-known local artists, as well as music, poetry and theater.

"It's a perfect space, and certainly large enough, to accommodate some cultural entertainment for the people out here," she said. "I'm hoping to work with the Town on some ideas for the future." Principi Art Barn will be closing after this show, which runs through November 11, and will reopen in the spring with more shows. For information, or gallery hours by appointment, call 631-466-4462.