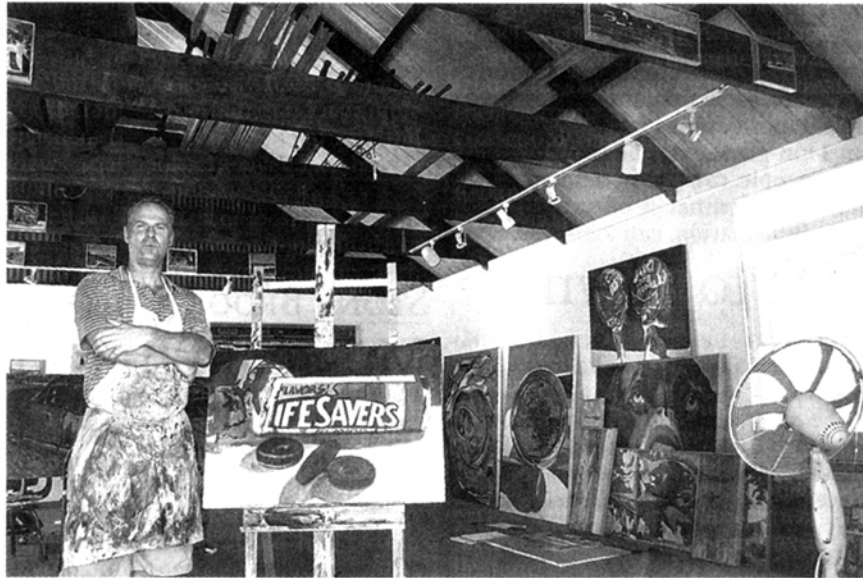


WELCOME: Studios belonging to artists Danielle Epstein in Noyac (above), Scott Hewett in Pine Neck (left) and Mark Mulholland in Sag Harbor (inset) will be on the tour presented by the Artists' Alliance of East Hampton, July 10-12.



ARTISTS' ALLIANCE STUDIO TOUR

Into the Artist's Lair

BY ANNETTE HINKLE

A chance to observe the creative muse

If artistic vision is rooted in inspiration, then it's logical to wonder what role an artist's studio plays in the process. Whether an artist works best when surrounded by blank white walls or an endless expansive vista, when the view is divine, so too, it stands to reason, is the inspiration.

Beginning today, the AAEH hosts its annual three-day artist studio tour. The tour gives art lovers a chance to see artists in their working environment, peruse the work and, in many studios, simply enjoy the view. On view this year will be studios from Southampton to East Hampton and among the artists taking part are three in the Sag Harbor area whose studios are set in locales that may entice tour goers to linger a little longer.

Scott Hewett - Pine Neck

Scott Hewett has been in his new studio all of three weeks. Granted, it's just 10 feet from his old studio, but location is everything and it's hard to imagine a better one for an artist. Located at Hidden Cove Marina at the end of Pineneck Road in Noyac, the building, formerly used to house equipment at the marina, has ample space for Hewett's large paintings and views that look out over the bay to Jessup's Neck and beyond.

Hewett found studio space at the marina when he went looking for a boat slip. He developed a rapport with the marina owners and three years ago began renting a small space. But he always had his eye on the larger metal roofed building at the marina.

"I kept begging the owners," he says. "They said, 'All right, we'll give you the space.' We insulated it, sheet rocked, added new lights, put in French doors. It made it nicer. It has ample light, but I would like to add skylights in the winter."

Hewett, a Boston native, came to the East End with his wife, Diane, who grew up in East Hampton. For years Hewett worked at Reebok designing footwear for athletes. He has in his possession a size 22 shoe designed for Shaquille O'Neal and now has a contract designing for New Balance.

While footwear has been his bread and butter and a field Hewett literally stumbled into (his words), what he truly enjoys is painting. With his strong graphic sensibility and love of bold colors, the subjects of Hewett's photorealistic paintings often evoke a sense of nostalgia among viewers. Old pick up trucks and faithful dogs are frequently featured.

"I do a lot of trucks," he confesses, "and an old truck looks better than a new truck. There's so much that happens in the course of its life span. I like painting something that people take for granted. It's something that grabs you."

In a new series of work, Hewett is focusing on iconic candies from youth: Hershey Kisses, Tootsie Pops and LifeSavers. Hewett also likes to paint landscapes or even overlooked objects in



life — such as a crushed beer can on a beach.

"I look at things differently, in photos or in life," says Hewett. "Sometimes I like to take a subject and blow it up large, so it's almost abstract, but realistic in the way I paint it."

"The best way I can describe it is it feels like the viewer is standing there at that spot."

Danielle Epstein - Noyac

Danielle Epstein's home is the subject of a local legend. A rambling rustic hillside cottage that overlooks the bay, it is, in fact, an old rum runner's cottage.

"They would bring the booze in from the bay," she explains. "Inside the bedroom was a secret room that you could only have access to from the exterior of the house. There's an urban legend about tunnels going through the hillside. But I don't know about that."

The cottage sits on a two-acre parcel on the water, and when the chance arose to purchase an adjacent acre when Rawson Estates was developed, Epstein jumped at it. It is on that parcel that Epstein has built her expansive barn studio space.

"Because I have the house at the end of the hill and contiguous property, I didn't want something that looked like a second house," explains Epstein.

"Surrounded by tall grasses and untouched woods, the studio feels as if it's in the middle of the country. Though it's not an old structure (Epstein designed it herself), the barn looks as if it's been part of the landscape for years.

"I wanted a big studio space that was versatile with high ceilings and lots of light," says Epstein, who divides her time between the East End and Greenwich Village.

With its soaring ceilings, loft spaces and huge windows, the brightly lit studio is decorated with many examples of Epstein's art. Epstein, who began her artistic career as a painter, moved into photography a number of years ago. But she has kept her painterly approach to the medium, and offers images that are often abstract and always thought provoking.

Her current body of work includes large abstract images of several close up views of a single object. The photos are arranged graphically so that the viewer has to study them closely to determine what the objects might be.

"I got tired of painting and wanted to start telling stories," explains Epstein

who first worked with old photographs of people she did not know. "I got into photography as a medium for storytelling. The work has come full circle. I'm back to doing abstract photography. I focus on details that one doesn't see and I expand and reconfigure them."

Mark Mulholland - Sag Harbor

Mark Mulholland's studio in Sag Harbor may not be expansive, at least not in size, but the setting is bucolic. Tucked in a former garage on a tiny lot behind the historic Garden Street home he shares with Carl Peterson, Mulholland's studio is surrounded by an intimate garden.

From the French doors of the studio, it is possible to look out into a sea of color — shades of green from grasses and graceful ivy, orange of day lilies and purples of hydrangeas and hostas, the view is a feast for the eyes. It is also inspiration for Mulholland's art.

"I'm inspired by the colors of the garden," he says. "My Sag Harbor garden series is directly from the garden."

Mulholland's paintings are an exploration of language. But his is a language rooted in form, not words. Abstract geometric shapes are repeated and layered one upon another until, eventually, a new form occurs to Mulholland. That form will then be incorporated into repeated shapes in defined patterns.

"They're like handwriting," explains Mulholland. "Like the pattern of a chain link fence or the lines of leaves that are translated into handwriting."

In addition to his large acrylic canvases, Mulholland has been working with a process known as white line printing. Developed in Provincetown in the early 1900s, it is a process in which Mulholland applies water color paint to the raised surfaces of a wood block that has been carved with an image.

Unlike traditional block printing, in white line printing, the outline of a figure remains white. It is the interior color that defines the object. Mulholland finds that the results he achieves can vary greatly depending on the qualities of the paper he prints on.

Mulholland, an art teacher in a Bronx school, also has a studio in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. While there is a vibrant art scene there, Mulholland is always happy to get back to his summer studio by the sea.

"I love the location in the middle of the garden," says Mulholland. "At 7 or 8 in the morning, the light comes in the window, I have the radio on and I'm painting away, I'm so happy."

"It's quiet — it's nice," adds Mulholland. "The garden is always inspirational — if I need a break I can go look at the boats or walk downtown."

The Artists Studio Tour of the Hamptons runs July 10 through 12. Studios are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. A three-day pass is \$55 and can be purchased at BookHampton, East End Books, Gone Local Gallery, Walk Tall Gallery, Hamptons Photo Arts and Mixed Media or by calling 324-2225.