

Lifestyle

“To create one’s own world in any of the arts takes courage.”
Georgia O’Keeffe



Local artist
Shelley Barry
has an eye for art
and a mind for
business. >>>

women of note
kiss and tell
movie talk
random thoughts

40
42
46
47

dvd review
music talk
local music

47
48
49

women of note



the art of devotion

ART IS MORE THAN A BUSINESS FOR SAN RAMON'S SHELLEY BARRY, IT'S HER PASSION

by KIM PACE

As an artist, Shelley Barry fills her home with beauty and self-expression; as a mother, she helped create a flourishing art program in the San Ramon schools; as a community activist, she is actively engaged in encouraging public art.

The obsession with art began at a young age. While other families enjoyed backyard games of ball or splashing in a swimming pool, Barry's extended family would gather for a barbeque and conjoined art show, in which all family members were encouraged to participate. She flourished in her art—it was the one thing she could count on.



“Mom always said I would have been a kindergarten dropout because the only things I was good at were gym and art,” says Barry. “Art was the one thing that kept me going through college. I could feel good about myself and could express myself.” Little did Barry know that her artistic passion would lead her to champion art in both public and private spaces.

Barry’s activism began innocuously with a few art-related jobs after college. Later, as a mother of two sons, she was content to express her creativity in her home studio—but she didn’t remain insulated for long. Remembering how art had helped her as a child, Barry’s

community involvement began when her youngest son entered kindergarten. She taught a few art classes as a parent volunteer, and was an active participant in Student Art for Education (SAFE) in San Ramon, an organization that provides a fine arts program taught in schools by trained parent volunteers and professional artists.

When the tragedy of September 11 hit, Barry was moved by “an overwhelming desire to do something to memorialize the event.” With the support of her son’s principal, she initiated a school-wide art project that allowed the children, and eventually the community, to express their feelings about the national disaster. This project led to a year-round art program at the school, and the annual Art-a-Palooza, an entire school day each year devoted to fine arts activities.

Barry was not done, however; her passion became her obsession. She served on the San Ramon Art Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations to the Parks Commission regarding public art; she participated in the drafting of a public arts policy, which is currently under consideration by the city; and, she launched the city’s first-ever art banner project last year. “I wanted to create an outdoor gallery where people could see art in public places; it just happens to be on light poles.”

In her activism, she found her calling. “I always noticed that the walls in public buildings screamed at me with their bareness,” says Barry. “I realized that my purpose is to put art in people’s lives.”

Along with four other artists, she opened Artescape Studios in 2004 to promote art interest and awareness in San Ramon. The venture didn’t succeed (it closed down in February 2006), but it was a defining experience for Barry.

“I wanted to provide the community with a gallery, a place where people could buy fine, contemporary works of art without traveling to San Francisco,” says Barry. “I loved to go into art studios looking for artists for a new show. I realized I could do this on my own, and needed to focus on my own business in a more purposeful way.”

Her company, Artful Solutions, is a full-service art consulting firm specializing in corporate, healthcare, and hospitality environments. “I want to make people more aware of how art can enhance an environment. It really does create a soul in the room, making it more special and intimate. It says something about expressing yourself,” she says. Barry also works with residential interior designers. Services include art selection, framing, delivery, and installation. Through Artful Solutions, Barry successfully matches clients and artists in business environments, and emboldens residential clients to enliven their homes through art. “I tell them it’s not about others liking the art on your walls, but about expressing your own personality.”

“Someday I will focus (only) on my own art again, but it’s harder—when you’re a true artist, you live, breathe, and die art. It’s so consuming,” she says. Right now, she’s busy turning others on to the power and passion of art. [VLM]

SHELLEY BARRY (925) 683-4804 | ArtfulSolutions.net