

## Art and Architecture Share the Spotlight In 16th Annual "Art of the Barn" Tour



ART OF THE BARN: What was once a 19th-century barn has been renovated to become a 21st-century home. A project of Princeton's FORD3 Architects, the home is one of seven stops on the Bucks County Audubon Society's 16th annual Art of the Barn Tour and Show. Architect Moira McClintock, a partner in FORD3, will deliver the opening talk.

With their stone walls and timber frames, Bucks County barns are prized for their architecture as well as their link to the area's agricultural heritage. Increasingly, barns that are structurally sound are being converted into unique living or working spaces for those with the resources to take on these often daunting projects.

Seven of them in New Hope, Solebury, and Buckingham, Pennsylvania will be open to the public the weekend of July 10-12 as part of the 16th Annual Art of the Barn Tour & Show. This popular event showcases the work of accomplished local artists and sculptors. But for some, it is the barns themselves that are the stars of the show.

Architect Moira McClintock, a partner with the Princeton firm FORD3, is familiar with the challenges of converting a barn to other uses through her work on the barn at Princeton's Johnson Education Center as well as one for members of her family. On July 10, she will officially open the tour with a talk about her experiences converting barns into living and working spaces.

"Every barn is unique," she said last week. "What's fascinating to me as an architect is the differences within them, and how those shape what you ultimately do with the space."

Depending on when a barn was built, these differences can be considerable. Bucks County barns range from those built in the 1700s to some from the 1930s. "The older ones tend to be built much better than those from the twenties and thirties, when people started moving away from heavy timber construction," Ms. McClintock said. "In a 1930s dairy barn, the upper level was a hayloft, and that's different from earlier ones."

Most of the large spaces in former barns are located on the upper levels. Animals were kept in smaller areas on the lower levels. "When you think about most residential design, you think about the big spaces being downstairs," Ms. McClintock said. "When you're working with an agricultural structure, you have to be open to the larger spaces being upstairs, rather than forcing it to be something it is not."

Ms. McClintock was especially fond of the work FORD3 did on the barn that became the D&R Greenway's Johnson Education Center. "It's a great fit of program and space," she said. "I also loved a project we did that is on the tour, because it was done for part of my family. We were able to re-use a lot of materials we'd saved over the years. Part of the barn had collapsed in a big snowstorm in 1996, but we were able to use the siding for interior finishes."

That oldest part of the barn dates from 1800. Like others in Bucks County, some of its walls are stone, which presented a challenge. "A big stone wall has very little insulate value," Ms. McClintock said. "We wanted it to be energy efficient, so we had to cover up the stone on the inside and use spray foam insulation and radiant heat. Those were the trade-offs we had to make. That's one of the biggest challenges — deciding how to approach insulation. Do you do it from the outside, or the inside? Especially if you have post and beam structure, you don't want to hide that. So it's a big decision."

At her talk, Ms. McClintock will focus on those kinds of details and experiences. "There are different things you need to think about when you're approaching this kind of project," she said. "There are different ways to give historic buildings, and particularly agricultural structures, viable life in today's society. I'll be looking at living history barns, residential conversions, and a number of case studies. Not every barn can become a living history structure. But we don't want to lose the ones that are left."

Discovering that a barn cannot be converted to a living space can be discouraging. "There was a couple looking to buy properties, and they had the idea of living in a converted barn," Ms. McClintock recalled. "They found one in a beautiful setting in Bucks County. It looked fabulous from the outside. But on the inside, people had taken out the timber and built a conventional house. It was the saddest thing."

Despite such scenarios, Ms. McClintock sees an increase in the number of barns being converted to other uses. "People are looking for ways to keep these buildings viable," she said. "The most important thing people can do is keep the roof sound. Because once the water comes in, it's amazing how quickly damage can occur."

The Art of the Barn Tour and Show begins with Ms. McClintock's talk on Friday, July 10 at 6:30 p.m. at the Audubon Visitor Center, 2877 Creamery Road in New Hope. Admission is \$5 for members of the Bucks County Audubon Society; \$10 for non-members.

Docents will be on hand at each location to reveal facts about the barns' history and renovations. The tour and show is Saturday, July 11 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; and Sunday, July 12 from 12-4:30 p.m. Admission is \$20 for members; \$30 for non-members. Combination tickets for the talk and show are \$25 for members; \$35 for non-members. Visit [www.bcas.org](http://www.bcas.org) for more information and barn locations.

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