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The Resident: Rick Friedman's Hamptons

BY MICHELLE TAY | JUNE 28, 2015



Rick Friedman (Courtesy of Hamptons Expo Group)

As president of **Hamptons Expo Group**, Rick Friedman is charged with staging fine art fairs including the Houston Fine Art Fair, the Palm Springs Art Fair, ArtAspen, and **ArtHamptons**, which runs this July 2-5 in Bridgehampton, New York, featuring prominent galleries offering some of the finest post-war and contemporary art.

Having built his career as a media entrepreneur in the 1990s, Friedman has founded many magazines, journals, books, expos and conferences, including SIGS Publications, the New York- and Los Angeles- based Digital Video Shows, and the renowned filmmaker trade show, ShowBiz Expo.

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But ArtHamptons was borne out of Friedman's realization that, after having acquired more than 125 museum-level paintings of 20th Century American art over the last decade, he was not only buying slices of history, but also relics of home. Simply put, the East End resident found himself moved by the stories, images and relationships formed by the artists who worked in the area in the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

Since its debut eight years ago, the fair has turned out to be the perfect marriage of the luxury of the Hamptons and the beauty of serious art. As Friedman previously told ARTINFO, summertime fairs near the beaches inspire spontaneous purchases, and present opportunities for collectors interested in discovering emerging and contemporary artists.

"Within the approximately 60 miles that comprises the Hamptons, there are about 2,500 active artists residing in the area, which is an amazing number given the small year round population," says Friedman. "Art is everywhere, and we have a long, 100-year history of attracting artists who enjoy the Hamptons' culturally savvy community, chic indoor-outdoor living, stellar architecture and summer scene."

Case in point is the site of the Pollock-Krasner House and Studio in Springs, East Hampton. A few blocks away from Willem De Kooning's residence-studio, the area is steeped in tradition and, while currently somewhat of a less pricey neighborhood, is starting a period of regrowth as an artist colony, some with galleries in the homes, like they were back in the 1950s and 60s, adds Friedman.

Just in time for collectors heading to ArtHamptons next week — which has a new home this year in a 40,000 sq. ft. tented pavilion on private estate grounds at Lumber Lane & Scuttle Hole Road, in order to accommodate about 70 international fine art galleries — the art fair connoisseur has shared his insider's tips to discovering and enjoying his home turf.

A couple of places he likes going back to, for instance, are the famous Montauk Point Lighthouse in Montauk, as well as the Coopers Beach in Southampton. "Did you know the beach was voted best beach in America [in 2010 by Dr. Beach, a.k.a. Dr. Stephen Leatherman, Professor and Director of the Laboratory for Coastal Research at Florida International University]?", he notes, adding that he gets all nostalgic about the lighthouse. "In all seasons but especially in spring and winter, [the lighthouse] holds special memories for me. It is a remarkable sight and I often go there to relax and get motivated."

For architecture buffs, the old building that housed the former Parrish Museum in Southampton, which is celebrating its 375th anniversary this year, is well worth a visit. "You can feel the history as you walk in — as if the walls could talk," says Friedman.

The new Parrish Art Museum, on the other hand, is a thrillingly different experience. Apart from a permanent collection comprising more than 2,600 works ranging from early 19th-century landscape paintings through American Impressionism, the museum also displays two new 20 ft-tall sculptures by Roy Lichtenstein in its lawn just off the town's main road.

"I think the two new sculptures are wonderful and dramatic, and remind everyone that this was and still is an artist colony. Roy Lichtenstein lived and worked right here in the neighborhood," observes Friedman.

Other inspirational art spaces he frequents include the Guild Hall in East Hampton, for its "invigorating exhibitions," as well as Mark Borghi Fine Art Gallery in Bridgehampton, which specializes in American post-war art, and where Friedman likes to shop for gifts. "He deals with the work of many famous artists, so seeing what he has is always a thrill. I must have bought a couple dozen works over the years."

Equally diverse are the East End's food and beverage offerings, which range from down-home local favorites to classy joints boasting great views of the water.

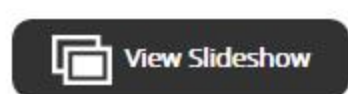
"When I return from my many travels, I prefer to dine at local spots like La Parmigiana in Southampton. Sundays on the Bay and The Inn Spot, both located in the Hamptons Bays, offer great food while overlooking the Peconic Bay," says Friedman.

Of course, before you visit, you'll want to suss out a few good places to stay for an authentic experience. Friedman recommends The Southampton Inn, which touts itself as an unpretentious boutique hotel that melds European elegance with modern comforts. Says Friedman: "It's just a short walk from Main Street Southampton, which is always a treat."

A more luxurious option, however, is Gurney's Montauk Resort & Seawater Spa. "It is a special spot, as it is one of the few hotels right on the beach. Their spa overlooks the ocean, and is a prime spot for local residents in all four seasons," he says. "Nothing is better."

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