

# WHY PAINT BARNES?

by Sherry McVickar



Why BARNES?

Who doesn't love BARNES?

To paraphrase Robert Frost, "Something there is that... makes us love a BARN." It's just like other irresistible things: puppies, kittens: BARNES!

My paintings make us see with new eyes something we otherwise take for granted. I hope this article will have that same effect. My paintings show BARNS through my eyes. A psychologist friend, looking at my website, said, “Your paintings fill me with a sense of comfort. Why?” I replied, “Our ancient Greco-Roman heritage has given us the classical proportions which trigger peace in our souls. The Greco-Romans believed that balance reflected the Harmony of the Universe. BARNS’ proportions do that to us. BARNS are just like comfort food for the soul.” \*Picture #1

I come to painting BARNS not from a role as Fine Artist;- although I don’t sign a painting and let it out of the studio unless it is Fine Art - I come to paint BARN portraits from an artisan’s point of view. This point of view has five angles.

#1. I have been a builder since I was four years old. At that age my job was painting the creosote on the beams for my dad’s new house. Thirty-four years later, as a member of the Plasterer’s Union Local 66 in San Francisco, I adored sealing sheet rock with topping compound. Applying paint as I do with a palette knife is a very similar technique to that of taping and mudding ‘rock. The magician says, “It’s all in the wrist.” My palette knife moves in ways very similar to how mud is applied to sheetrock. My painting style is characterized by building up thick layers of paint on the canvas. This technique is called ‘impasto’. “Van GOO” is my painter nickname. I like my paint goeey and thick.

#2. I like to imagine myself as a Piqueresque portraitist of the pre-photography era. I travel the country side knocking on complete stranger’s doors asking if I may paint a picture of their BARN, not their family. I don’t ask if I may sleep in their BARN and do little jobs for a sandwich, but I do return and present them with an eight by ten glossy photograph of my painting of their BARN. To date this has left me with a four bedroom home so full of paintings on every surface of wall space that I have mounted two of my paintings on the ceilings. No wonder I pursue gallery owners like a mosquito. I’ve gotta hustle the goods outta my house, or else rent a storage unit.

I ask you: Can you ask for a better life? I sit in the shade on a warm, cloudless day with a cold drink and my devoted dog by my side, listening to the birds, bees, and animal conversations. This is the nature of what’s called “Plien Aire” painting. A hugely significant part of my joy in painting BARNS is that I get to use gorgeous colors: Diozenine Purple in the shadows, Sap Green, Orange and Cerulian Blue in the grass, and Pale Cadmium Yellow where the sun is strongest. These colors can be seen in my portraits of humans, but they are not so widely appreciated. Supremely important is the fact that the Muse of BARN Art and I get along famously.

#3. I paint BARNS because of my love of architecture. I love the physics of construction, and the older the better. I, personally, with my own hands, have built many different kinds of structures for all kinds of purposes, so I love to see how the pioneer, the settler, the caveman, the explorer, built Back In The Day when there was a more even balance between human and nature. The BARN has more charm than a residence because I see its skeleton, joints, and musculature. They are living entities to me. They speak to me: I ‘get’ their emotions. Mostly what they say to me is, “Save my life!”

#4. I don't want to see the Grandes Dames bulldozed for any reason; malls, industry, economic growth or mis-guided progress; none of which has any basis other than in greed. There is so much wrong with our emphasis on greed that I won't even discuss it here.

#5. (and most of all) BARNS are like pigs. Every part of the pig is used but the squeal. BARNS have a practical purpose; every part of a barn is built to be used. That is the secret of the fascination of the BARN. My paintings sing the praises of the BARN and all she stands for. Long may she live. I have no problem painting the black tobacco BARNS of Kentucky (\*Picture #3), or Capay Valley, California's BARNS (\*Picture #2) that are a jumble of desiccated lumber and corrugated tin that are barely standing. The BARN triggers archetypal responses in both genders. Men respond to its cave-ish-ness; women to its nest-like capabilities; but all people say:" Think of the stuff we can pack in there!"

BARNS are as beautiful as any horse, or iris, or waterfall, or sunset, Michelangelo's "Pieta", or chocolate fountain. We must band together and rise up and fight for saving their lives all across this country. The US has an extremely rich farming heritage which must-at all costs-be preserved in art and life. Please join me in seeing and appreciating them for the first time or the thousandth. (\*Picture #4)

Sherry McVickar

See her full gallery at [www.barnlady.net](http://www.barnlady.net)







