

**TOP TEN REAL ESTATE DEALS**



The estate near Manhattan and the Hamptons has six bedrooms, six fireplaces, a wine cellar, a theater and stalls for 10 horses.

**Bring the family and your horses to Mill Neck**

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A Long Island mansion and equestrian estate that has been a prominent player in the thoroughbred race horse business is for sale at \$10 million. The listing, which includes a 15,000-square-foot home and 10-stall horse stable, was also a film site for several movies and television programs, including “The Wolf of Wall Street” with Leonardo DiCaprio and episodes of the TV series “Elementary.”

About 30 minutes from New York’s Belmont Park near Manhattan and the Hamptons, the Mill Neck property includes the six-bedroom home on five acres of rolling pasture, lawn and trees, an apartment and tack room, paddocks, and a riding ring. About 100 race-winning horses have trained at the facility.

The French chateau-style home with a turret and steep-pitched roof is set at the end of a long driveway past a courtyard and lush landscaping. Home features include wood and marble floors,

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COURTESY PHOTOS



*Knock* ON WOOD

COCOON GALLERY  
 TURNS RAW TIMBER  
 INTO ARTISAN FURNITURE



BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA  
 Florida Weekly Correspondent

**M**ITCHELL SIEGEL grew up in the textile business and thought that would be his career path. Raised in Westchester, N.Y., Mr. Siegel helped his father, a textile buyer, sell fabric to more than 1,000 stores nationwide. His mother and grandmother operated a small fabric store.

“At the time, textiles were a huge industry in the United States,” Mr. Mitchell says. “Fifty years ago, everyone had a sewing machine like today everyone has a coffee maker.”

SEE COCOON, A18 ►



TIM GIBBONS / FLORIDA WEEKLY  
**Cocoon Gallery** artisans use materials sourced from Asia and Brazil by owner Mitchell Siegel and other team members to create one-of-a-kind pieces of furniture and decor, such as a mahogany char burned tree root from Indonesia (top) and an undersea vine from the Philippines (left, with Mr. Siegel).



TIM GIBBONS / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Established in Connecticut in 2009, Cocoon Gallery moved its showroom and woodshop to Naples recently. Custom work, especially live-edge tables, keeps the 20 artisans busy.

# COCOON

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After graduating from the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz with a degree in economic business, Mr. Siegel ventured into the textiles world just as spandex was soaring in popularity. He and a friend jumped on the bandwagon.

“We hit on this and within a couple of years became the largest exporter of Lycra spandex in the United States,” he says.

It was through this business that he established relationships in Southeast Asia that eventually led to his furniture business.

“When the textile industry left the U.S. and went to Mexico and then Asia, we became obsolete,” he shares.

Mr. Siegel started doing contract textile work in the Philippines, using his free time to explore the country’s many islands. He found inspiration for his next venture from the local craftspeople.

“I was amazed how they would take a tree and carve from what was given to them,” he recalls. He envisioned a market for products made from nature.

“People made fun of me, saying ‘You’re picking this stuff up off the shores of the beach and putting it on a stand.’ But I had belief in this stuff.”

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Cocoon Gallery owner

In 2009, Mr. Mitchell opened Cocoon Gallery in Greenwich, Conn., offering nature-inspired, hand-crafted furnishings and décor.

In 2020, he opened a showroom on Fifth Avenue South in Naples and recently established a 25,000-square-foot woodshop nearby, moving all operations to Florida. The company caters to clients in the design, architecture and hospitality communities, sports and entertainment celebrities, and buyers from throughout the country.

Cocoon Gallery is a licensed importer of exotic wood from Southeast Asia. The wood is sustainably harvested; only fallen trees are sourced, and a tree is planted for each tree harvested for the company.

They primarily use the popular acacia for slabs and narra roots as bases, but they also work with kamagong, also called velvet apple or velvet persimmon for the edible fruit it produces.

Referred to as “ironwood,” its dense, hard and dark timber is also used to make furniture. Although widely found in the Philippines, it is also an endangered species that requires a special permit for exporting the timber, which Cocoon Gallery has.

Mr. Siegel and his team make extensive travels in the Philippines and elsewhere in Indonesia to source new materials. They are going again this fall.

“I get some rare kamagong out of a region where people won’t travel to,” he says. “I go right to the source. I want



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Handmade clay from Northern Thailand.

to find it.”

He says this sets him apart from other furniture and décor makers.

“The difference between us and other people in this type of business is that people can go to a country like Thailand and buy a container of finished product and bring it over, but it might warp, crack, or it will feel like rough sandpaper. We bring the stuff in raw and produce it here.” Producing pieces for Cocoon is an extensive process that involves state-of-the-art equipment, including a drying system kiln, so the wood won’t crack or warp, he adds.

Mr. Siegel also sources exotic stones, agate, geodes and other minerals from Brazil, importing raw cuts and polishing the pieces in Naples.

In the Cocoon woodshop, which is open to the public by appointment, more than 20 artisans create original

live-edge furniture and décor such as tables, mirrors, sculptures, wall art and towering root sculptures. They work with slabs, chunks, roots, sea vines, lotus leaves and other material. They might dry, flatten, bleach, pigment, carve and fill wood crotches with epoxy to create the one-of-a-kind pieces.

Buyers of tables, bases or root sculptures can select their own wood slabs, some measuring up to 20 feet long, and have them customized to precise styles and dimensions.

Most of the tables Cocoon sells are white satin, but Mr. Siegel says gray is also popular as well as royal blue, fuchsia and hues of green.

Custom work is in high demand. “People send their architect here and say they want to design a room around one of our tables because they’re so refined and exotic,” he says.

They sell a lot of tables, are known for their root sculptures, but also take pride in wall pieces made from dried and painted twigs and crushed mollusks.

“We’re using what’s given to us by nature,” he says. “All we’re doing is making something out of it that can go into people’s homes and be unique and high quality. People are amazed that we can take something from the ground or hanging in a tree and make something out of it.” ■

## In the KNOW

### Cocoon Gallery

- » 602 Fifth Ave. S., Naples
- » 239-263-8889
- » www.cocoongallery.com
- » Showroom open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily; woodshop visits by appointment only.