



No Boundaries cofounders—Pamela Toll (left), Dick Roberts, and Gayle Tustin—met years ago while working together in a drawing group. Wayne McDowell paints nearby.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NICK MCKENNEY

## Artists Escape To Create

This international art colony provides a haven for creativity on Bald Head Island.

**N**o Boundaries. None. Nada. Ever. This international art colony invites a lucky few from around the world (and some from close to home) to explore creativity with wild abandon for two glorious weeks without distractions or restrictions. The only limit may be the artists' imaginations.

Wilmington-based artists Pamela Toll, Dick Roberts, and Gayle Tustin started No Boundaries (held every other November) in 1998.

"My biggest joy in doing this is making available to more people the uninterrupted time to paint," says Pamela. "It's a high to do that and to embrace and share as artists. It's time-out from the real world."

Gayle adds, "It brings a greater understanding of diverse cultures. It's one little drop in the sea for world peace."

"Working with No Boundaries validates my private efforts," Dick says. "The studio can be a lonely place, but memories of the energies of others—the passion of the others—keeps art alive for me in the lean times."

### Cutting Edge

The trio modeled their gathering after the one they attended in the tiny Balkan country of Macedonia. "We start by choosing artists we have met abroad or at other international art colonies," says Gayle. "We also ask previous No Boundaries attendees to make recommendations." The last

gathering included artists from Switzerland, France, and Denmark.

It functions like this: No Boundaries provides participating international artists with room, board, art supplies, and two weeks of unlimited time to pursue art in exchange for two paintings.

Pamela suggested they look no further than across Cape Fear River for the perfect place for the colony—Bald Head Island. Having worked out on the island, she understood how the light, landscape, and atmosphere inspired creativity. Pamela also knew Kent Mitchell, whose family owns the resort island. "He helps us in so many ways," Pamela says. "We couldn't do it without him." ▶

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*Dick Roberts, No Boundaries cofounder*

### Colony Camaraderie

Everyone stays in one of the three guesthouses known as Captain Charlie's cottages. Visiting artists set up makeshift studios in these homes or work side by side at the restaurant Eb & Flo's. Still others set up easels near the beach. “It's interesting how everyone chooses their spots,” says Gayle.

While on their own for breakfast and lunch, everyone comes together for dinner. “A lot of serious conversation takes place at the table, in spite of the language barrier,” Gayle says. “Art is the common language.”

Partnering on No Boundaries comes surprisingly easy for Pamela, Gayle, and Dick. “As partners, we share responsibilities equally but with attention to our unique abilities,” Dick says.

### Behind the Canvas Scenes

Like many arts organizations, getting the funding for a project of this size remains a constant challenge. Gayle says, “No one gets paid to do this. We do it because we love art.”

Bartering helps. Some donors give goods or services in exchange for a painting by one of the visiting artists. “We have given paintings in exchange for donor levels of \$1,000 to \$3,500,” says Dick. “We rely on sponsorship dollars for art supplies, ferry tickets, food, and more. Because we are a nonprofit group, people can receive a tax deduction for monetary donations.”

As its biggest sponsor, Bald Head Island provides a number of perks, including housing and the use of



The communal table provides a great forum for sharing ideas and philosophies.



Eb & Flo's (which closes in November for the season). With no cars and miles of beautiful beaches, the island is the quintessential setting for the gathering.

### **Lasting Memories**

The effects of No Boundaries last long after the paint dries, the visiting artists leave, and everyday life resumes.

"The thing that keeps me stoked about No Boundaries is the new and old friendships made through painting together," says Dick. "These have become lifelong friendships and will certainly shape our futures."

"I feel like it's a jolt in my veins," adds Gayle. "Being with like-minded people validates what I do, and the exchange of ideas is phenomenal. The influence on the subconscious level lasts. I think seeing how other people work makes my work stronger."

"This energy and exuberance builds when you have all these creative people together," concludes Pamela. "It's like an intense pause or break. When I get back to the studio, it all releases...artwork spews from me sometimes for weeks, even months after the colony." SARA ASKEW JONES

**For more information:** Write to No Boundaries, Inc., 711 North Fifth Avenue, Wilmington, NC 28401.