

No Boundaries

Every other year in November, artists from around the world gather on Bald Head Island to immerse themselves in an atmosphere of intense creativity.



by Joel Ferrnando

With the evolution of communication, it is no surprise that the globe is becoming more connected. As networks are created from one continent to the next, we are able to work together to pursue the same goals. These goals may be focused on sharing an idea or even a moment and may expose others to a perspective they had never known, helping to understand a different country, a different culture, a different person.

As the world grows smaller, it is important to understand the world around us. This is why ACME art house affiliates, Gayle Tustin, Dick

Roberts, and Pamela Toll, decided to found Wilmington's first international artist colony. They have successfully connected people from all around the world in an atmosphere that integrates free thinking and intellectual savvy. No social norms, no expectations, no plans, no pressures -thus, the *No Boundaries Artist Colony*. This art colony is a jewel, a haven for people to come and create works of art with others who share a common passion. Pamela Toll explains that "art institutions aren't necessarily serving all of the artists, and this is a way for us to further connect with people. There is a trend towards artists fig-

uring out creative ways to express and exhibit their art."

Twenty-three artists attended this year's colony, with eight of them from other parts of the globe such as Macedonia, UK, Barbados, Turkey, and China. Once they arrive in Wilmington these "ambassadors" take a 45-minute drive to the beach town of Southport and from there hop on a 30-minute ferry ride where they reach the secluded beaches of Bald Head Island. This island is a sacred escape from the distractions of traffic, noise, pollution and anything else that might hinder concentration. In the prepared residences and studios blank canvases, paints,

brushes, and tools await the artists' arrival, providing them the materials necessary for the next two weeks while they intensively construct and create pieces of art as they wish.

The two-week stay on the remote beaches of Bald Head Island isn't necessarily a vacation. From the first day they get there, these artists are hungry to paint, sculpt, and explore any medium they can get their hands on. As they begin to absorb their surroundings and get to know the friendly faces surrounding them, they get to work, showing each other their own tricks of the trade. The support they receive from each other

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1. Artwork by Gayle Tustin hangs in her cabin room. 2. Tustin prepares canvases. 3. Neville Crawford, from Barbados, talks with writer Joel Fernando. 4. Pam Toll, one of the founders of No Boundaries, transforms a kitchen into an art studio.



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helps to promote an experimental atmosphere that allows the artists to branch from their routine styles and themes and try something new. Traveling from the Highlands of Scotland, Rosie Newman spends her first

time in America testing out new ideas and processes, "Oh it's just a soup of creativity. The different mediums people are using, being able to get a few tips here and there while showing others what you know."

When people are working in such close quarters, 24 hours a day for two weeks, there is a bond that is formed between them. A support net is built upon trust, honesty, and experience, and strengthens with every day that passes. Everyone pitches in around the house while local volunteers prepare gourmet dishes to delight even the richest of tastes. People who attend the colony would agree with Pamela Toll when she

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talks about the connection: "Maybe we're all from different cultures and backgrounds, but there is one thing that makes us one family. There is this non-spoken acceptance that is void of judgment and expectation that enables us to all coexist."

There is no set place in which the artists must create their art. Whether it's in the studio spaces of the notable Captain Charlie Houses, in the light dappled forest, under the shade of the Old Baldy Lighthouse, or on the white shore beaches, there is a comfortable locale for everyone. Neville Crawford, from Barbados, explains, "So that's good for me in a sense; I work in two styles, realism and abstract. Abstract, indoors, I work in the studio. Realism, outdoors when the weather is good and sunny."

The mixed media style of collage is prevalent in just about everybody's work, which shows an accidental common theme for this year's collec-

tion. Hiroshi Sueyoshi is seen creating sculptures on the beaches with items that had washed ashore, while Gayle Tustin scours the waterline for any intriguing treasures hiding just above the sand, and Marjana Uzanceva sifts through her collection of fine fabrics and designs. The imaginations of the colony run wild. Whatever occurrences may happen, the droopy sunsets, witty conversations, and memories of home all have an effect on the artists' works. As Feridun Isimov says, "The influences are everywhere, you just have to go and find them."

Just when the artists are scratching the surface of their freshly explored styles, open perspectives, and newly found relationships, their two weeks on Bald Head Island are nearing an end. The once blank canvases begin to burst with life as oils, acrylics, fabrics, and found objects pour from imaginations and into creation...

During their last day on the island, they pack their creations into loading vans in preparation for the finale -the *No Boundaries* exhibit, set to take place at the *Acme Art Studio* on the North Side of Downtown Wilmington. A full exhibition of paintings, sculptures, and mixed media pieces

presented for the people of Wilmington to come and treat themselves to a diverse set of independently connected pieces. Hundreds of people mingle and chat with the artists in the studio, observing a full collection that took only two weeks to create.

The night allows the artists to revel amongst their international set of peers and observe their pieces in a gallery setting. Once the show ends, these artists who were so intensely connected with conversation, collaboration, and fantastic food over the past two weeks, bid farewell and return home to their friends and family to share their stories. Yet, there is a beginning from the end of *No Boundaries*, for each and every one of these artists takes home an experience that will influence their perception, as well as the style and form that they choose to express themselves. Artists with strong connections will continue to communicate on projects, branching off into collaborations or inviting each other to colonies around the world. The *No Boundaries Artist Colony* makes Wilmington's art scene globally relevant and allows artists of the world to come together and pursue their common goal. ■