



Celebrating 50-YEARS of Visual Arts in the Community

Wilmington Art Association's Spring Art Show & Sale
Returns for Azalea Festival on April 3 - 11, 2021

BY GEORGE CLARKE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE WILMINGTON ART ASSOCIATION, AND
THE HANNAH BLOCK HISTORIC/USO COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER

The Hannah Block/USO Building in downtown Wilmington was the site of the very first "North Carolina Azalea Week" 73-years ago when over 2,000 people assembled in front of the building to hear a live broadcast of a national radio program by famed news commentator, Ted Malone.

It was carried by 275 stations and reached over 25 million listeners.

This official celebration of spring has bloomed annually for 72 years until the onset of the coronavirus last year forced the cancellation of the North Carolina Azalea Festival for the first time since 1948.

"We had just three meetings before the COVID-19 lockdown," said Gail Guthrie, who served as incoming president of the Wilmington Art Association (WAA), a non-profit group that annually holds its Juried Spring Art Show and Sale in association with the N.C. Azalea Festival.

Her tenure quickly became a challenging one. "My goal was to figure out how to maintain a presence in the community and communicate to members that 'We will survive.'"



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Several months into the pandemic, Guthrie took a leap of faith. “I liken it to back when I sang the Halleluiah Chorus in the church choir and said, ‘Let’s make a joyful noise with art!’”

“We pulled the trigger in September.” Guthrie and WAA’s officers had determined that, “It was best to prepare for a live event and Juried Art Show understanding that if we were going to reopen and hold a public event, we needed to be ready for it.”

Though the COVID-19 crisis severely impacted the arts in Wilmington, the spirit of upliftment through the arts and a belief that art can bring communities together inspired their leadership team. WAA made a commitment of faith to hold the 39th Annual Juried Art Show and Sale on April 3rd through April 11th at the Hannah Block Historic/USO Community Arts Center located at 120 S. Second Street.

Eight months of planning and hard work has paid off for the dedicated team at the art association. A long-standing tradition with the N.C. Azalea Festival, the Wilmington Art Association is holding a nine-day show and sale from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. with extended hours of 5-10 p.m. on Friday, April 9th.

BROAD SPECTRUM OF ART

This year’s accepted entries represent a broad array of art across a spectrum of mediums and dimensions, from abstraction, to impressionism, and from realism to newly created methods of the art spirit.

Ben Billingsley, a painter and printmaker who has taught art and art history at Cape Fear Community College (CFCC) and lectured at UNCW’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and Cameron Art Museum, served as the 2021 Juror for the show. “Ben was pleased with the strong pieces that he saw,” Guthrie said.



This year with over 170 artists entering, 20 pieces were juried. The WAA Spring Show and Sale has juried pieces for sale from around \$150 to upwards of \$1,500; but the bin pieces are sold as they are unframed and are generally less expensive, with prices ranging from about \$25 to \$300. WAA “Art Ambassadors” will be available to answer questions from visitors and those interested in purchasing artwork.

“While many shows concentrate on specific media like watercolors, oils, acrylics, photography or sculpture, the WAA Spring show has it all,” said 3-D glass artist Elana Wright. Visitors to the Spring Art Show and Sale “will be surprised with the quality of art lovingly created by mostly local Wilmington-area artists,” she said.

Moving to the area in 2010, Wright joined the Wilmington Art Association, the Oak Island Art Guild and Cameron Art Museum (CAM) to learn from her fellow artists. She’s also a member of ArtWorks, an art village hosting potters, painters, metal sculptors, glass blowers, and 3-D artists like herself. “My work is one example of being in the right city with artists generous sharing their methodologies,” said Wright.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Wilmington Art Association is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to supporting arts and artists in the area through outreach efforts. Their members also support the community with school arts funding and annual scholarships to students at UNCW and CFCC.

Continued on page 26

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50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ART

Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the non-profit association was formed in 1971. "Fifty years ago, it was more of a social club for ladies that paint," Guthrie said.

"With the growth of Wilmington over the past 25 years, and the opening of I-40, the influx of residents who have taken up painting, throwing clay, and other media has proliferated," she explained.

"My main theme as president has been to promote the WAA as a group that welcomes people who are interested in the visual arts," said Guthrie. She previously served as a board member and treasurer of WAA and her artwork is focused on painting in acrylic, oils and collage.

Retirees relocating to the Cape Fear Region have been a significant source of new members for the organization. "They now have the time to pick up a brush, throw some clay, and do the things they've wanted to do, or last did when they were 16 years old," said Guthrie. "Now they can. WAA is also home to artists who have done it forever. Whether they've done it for a lifetime, or for a week, they have a place in WAA." The cost for a membership is \$35 annually.

Patti Chisholm is an award-winning artist who relocated with her husband from Northern Virginia in 2015 and set out to meet some fellow artists. "As I wandered the streets of Wilmington, it took awhile to locate my art tribe. Imagine my surprise when I was awarded 3rd Place and \$500 in the 2016 WAA Juried Spring Show. I was shocked!"

She quickly settled into her new "WAA home" becoming the Chairperson for the 2018 Juried Spring Show, "With over 200 members, we have a presence in the Wilmington community," said Chisholm. She enthusiastically extended an invitation for people interested in the visual arts to join WAA and gain community recognition through their shows and exhibitions, saying "WAA offers the new artist as well as the more experienced artist an opportunity to 'Learn, Grow, and Show.'"

An artist for over 30 years, Chisholm is "always on the lookout for the daily color and textural changes offered by Mother Nature" for her inspiration. "From the predawn fog and stillness of a bay to the fury of a hurricane, I delight in recording my impressions – by sketching, painting, photographing and writing – of her glorious and mysterious gift."



1st Solo Debut by Donna Launey



2nd Free Wheeling by Janice Castiglione



3rd Crabs by Debb Chiappisi



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WAA strives to provide their members with a collaborative forum to share ideas. "We want them to have a feeling of excitement, adventure, and exploration," according to Gail Guthrie.

2020 SHOW WINNERS

- 1st Solo Debut by Donna Launey
- 2nd Free Wheeling by Janice Castiglione
- 3rd Crabs by Debb Chiappisi

LANDFALL ARTISTS' ENTRIES

2021 Spring Show entries included artwork from residents in the Landfall community. Local examples of work exhibited by visual artists in the neighborhood include:

- Susan DiAnthony Pasquale:** *Go for the Gold and Snake River*
- Beth Foster:** *At Rest*
- Lorena Redding:** *Self Isolation #2 and Isolation Reflections*
- Peggy Vineyard:** *Monet's Garden and After the Bloom*
- Terri Littlejohn:** *Aspens in Winter*
- Joan McLoughlin:** *Let the Good Times Roll and The Apology*
- Pam McNeill:** *En Pointe*
- Lynn Meeker:** *A New Novel*

Contact springshow@wilmingtonart.org with questions about the event or visit online at www.Wilmington-art.org for membership information. ~

ART Show & Sale

Are you tired of staying home watching movies and reruns of The Office? Maybe it's time to get out and enjoy life again. What's better than seeing the top artists in the area showing off the art they have been creating for the last year. This is one of the many events happening during the Azalea Festival, but this year it will be one of the few live events. Don't miss out!



39TH ANNUAL JURIED SPRING SHOW & SALE

SHOW DATES: April 3 – APRIL 11, 2021

Hannah Block Historic USO/Community Arts Center
120 South 2nd St, Wilmington, NC 28401

Face Mask & Social Distancing will be Encouraged

Saturday, April 3rd - Thursday, April 8th, 10am - 5pm

Friday, April 9th - 10am - 7pm

Saturday, April 10th, 10am - 5pm

Sunday, April 11th, 10am - 4pm

Presented by the Wilmington Art Association
www.wilmington-art.org



Official Art Show of the Azalea Festival