

15 artists explore new vistas for 16th annual Thanksgiving weekend SEDAST studio tour

Visitors of the 16th Annual Southeastern Delaware Artists Studio Tour this Thanksgiving weekend will be treated to debuts of a host of new creations in contrasting styles and media, print premiers, talks, demonstrations, and the opportunities to participate in a group painting, shop for unique holiday gifts and win a work of art.

The free, self-guided, two-to-three-day tour, Nov. 26-28, takes visitors on a winding path through a 10-mile region to visit the working studios and galleries of 15 of the region's best known painters and fine artisans, several internationally recognized.

The artists on tour this year started planning for the event a year ago. The result is "a cornucopia of creations," including a few "out of the box" surprises by several artists pushing beyond the styles, subjects and mediums for which they're known.

European explorations of the countrysides of France and Italy are the inspirations for new paintings by abstract expressionist Tara Funk Grim and impressionist Laura Hickman. Traditional painter Barbara Dietrich is stretching her talents this tour to include experiments in abstract painting as an outward expression of inward journeys.

Ellen Rice's 40" wide, panoramic oil of the wetlands and wildlife of a peaceful cove in the James Farm Ecological Preserve, "Seclusion", contrasts starkly with her "vibrantly expressionistic," fourth volume in her ongoing *Strength of Woman Series*, "Freedom."

Surrealism contrasts with realism at the studio of painter and muralist Damon Pla, who will introduce the second in his *Enlightenment Series*, a 54" tall acrylic called "Inner Light," and a more traditional acrylic of an old farm road, barns and field lit called "The Long Afternoon."

Both Pla and Rice will debut limited edition, signed, numbered giclée prints of their newest works at the beginning of the tour at their respective locations.

Watercolorist Anne Hanna, best known for her large florals, shorebirds and horse series, is concentrating on "small works" in watercolors in a wide range of subjects, "from foxes to goldfish." Watercolorist and photographer Jennifer Carter is offering "Joie de vivre" at her beach cottage studio with such pieces as "Happy Hour" and en plein aire beach scenes and notecards featuring her works.

Surfing horses, flying pigs and dinosaurs on pogo sticks are a few of the imaginative subjects of painter John Donato – who promises to give tourgoers an entirely immersive experience during the tour at his studio: the chance to incorporate their

favorite subjects, books, hobbies and activities into one of his paintings. Donato will provide the tools and knowhow.

Leaving behind painted techniques, fabric artist Jill Thomas creates realistic landscape and seascape images by fusing hundreds of pieces of fabric together, which viewed from a distance create a cohesive whole. Ralph Semsker rounds out the tour's 2D offerings with whimsical beach houses painted in bright, colorful acrylics.

Hammer, metal, anvil and brute strength are the tools used by blacksmith Keith Toms in his blacksmith shop to create iron, copper and bronze functional and sculptural objects of art for home and hearth that reflect nature's organic forms.

Nature's organic forms are the foundation of Master Wood Turner Tom Frey's nationally collected wood turnings. Frey transforms blocks of wood into thin-walled, natural edge "turnings" using mostly local woods that are stressed by nature. The results are silkly smooth, glowing wooden vessels and ornaments.

Both Frey and Toms will demonstrate their skills during the tour.

Justin Cavagnaro and his new bride, Kim Doughty Cavagnaro, create works in glass and in clay, respectively. In their studio, Justin Cavagnaro continually experiments with new designs and refining his techniques to create sculptural and functional glass art with a contemporary touch. Kim Doughty Cavagnaro enjoys creating unique porcelain vessels with "elegant forms, beautiful colors and subtle nuances."

Last but not least, jewelry is the forte of Shelby Foxwell, who endeavors to emulate the colors, lines and textures that occur in nature while creating "enjoyable, comfortable" pieces of art jewelry, each piece unique to the wearer.

Art in the Hat

Every year each SEDAST tour artist donates one work of art to the tour's annual Art in the Hat fundraiser for local school art programs. Fifteen works of art will be given away this year to tour visitors. Ticket chances are \$10 each or three for \$25 and can only be purchased the first two days of the tour at the SEDAST studios and galleries.

To date, SEDAST has raised nearly \$30,000 for local elementary through high school art programs. Art in the Hat winners will be announced at the tour's conclusion.

Tour FAQs

The SEDAST tour is one of the most successful, long-lived art tours in the country and annually attracts more 1,000 visitors, who, guided by a free tour map, pick and choose the studios they wish to visit.

Tour hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday, Nov. 26, Saturday, Nov. 27, and for several of the studios, Sunday, Nov. 28. A brochure containing a map to all tour stops, hours of each studio, information and images of the artists and their works, and this year's Art in the Hat contributions is available at regional galleries and businesses and online at www.artstudiotour.com.

Each studio and gallery on the tour will be marked with orange and yellow balloons and signs pointing the way, and all studios have brochures. Many of the artists will be offering holiday refreshments and music throughout the festivities.

The public is invited to dress comfortably, bring friends, family, holiday guests and plan to have fun exploring the diverse creative talents abundant in Southeastern Delaware.

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