

The Visual Arts Community in Wilmington and South East North Carolina: A Digital Exhibit

THE HISTORY OF THE VISUAL ARTS COMMUNITY IN SOUTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

By Dr. John W. Myers

July 2008

What are the Visual Arts?

According to Richard Kamler, “Art is our one true global language. It knows no nation, it favors no race, and it acknowledges no class. It speaks to our need to reveal, heal, and transform. It transcends our ordinary lives and lets us imagine what is possible.”

Over time, the definition of the Visual Arts has been somewhat fluid. Variations often occur which appear to depend on the needs of the individual or group creating the definition. In its most generic form the visual arts would include any form of human creation that depends primarily on the sense of sight. In this very general definition, arts such as the performing arts of dance and music might qualify for inclusion under this heading.

Distinctions are also often made that separate two-dimensional art forms from three-dimensional ones. In such a definition, drawing, painting, photography, digitally created works, and printmaking would come under the former and qualify as *visual arts*, while sculpture and architecture might be placed in the category of *plastic arts*; and by extension, dance and music as well.

Another definition, which has its origins in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, makes a conscious separation between the *fine arts* and the *applied (or practical) arts*. Fine arts are thought to provide intellectual stimulation, while applied arts are usually designed for a specific function that involves everyday use. This definition would place drawing, painting, sculpture, and architecture in the category of the fine arts, while jewelry, ceramics, textiles, and other functional objects that incorporate aspects of creative design would fall into the applied category.

In all of these definitions, it is not hard to see the blurring of boundaries between categories. For example, architecture may appeal to the intellect, yet it also has a practical function; and, a beautifully designed vase may be perfect for displaying a bouquet of flowers, but still stand on its own as an object which stimulates us intellectually.

The bottom line, it seems, is that we can tailor the definition of art or the arts to suit our needs in a specific situation. So, for the purposes of this “Digital Exhibit,” let us qualify our definition of the *visual arts* by stating what its creators intend to include. In *The Visual Art Community in Wilmington and South East North Carolina: A Digital Exhibit*, the category, *visual arts*, includes drawing, painting, traditional photography, digital photography, printmaking, sculpture, works of craft (such as jewelry, pottery, and

textile art), and digitally created works (including original works reproduced in limited editions using methods such as *giclée*, a process of making fine art prints from a digital source using ink-jet printing). What it does not include are theatre, dance, music, architecture, film, or any form of written expression. With this in mind, the following essay provides a brief history of the Visual Arts of the southeast region of North Carolina from their beginnings to the present time.

The 18th Century

From the very beginning of European settlement of the Lower Cape Fear, the Visual Arts have been inextricably woven into the fabric of cultural history of Southeastern North Carolina. During all those years, art has given meaning and enjoyment to the lives of area residents in the context of social pastimes, religious experiences, and educational systems. As is the case in any vital and thriving community, the visual arts have been an essential and lively part of the cultural life of the region.

Documentation of the Visual Arts for Southeastern North Carolina in the eighteenth century is virtually nonexistent. However, if we rely the history of other eighteenth century colonial towns for which such written and visual evidence does exist, we may construct a plausible picture for the region. It is unlikely that any professional artists or sculptors were available, but local artisans have always been a part of the life of any community. As the population of the area grew along with the sophistication of its inhabitants, masons and stonecutters, carpenters and furniture-makers, as well as painters of houses, coaches, signboards and even fire-buckets would have been drawn to the various communities being established. In the early American tradition, such workmen often broadened their appeal by offering to carve gravestones, the predominant sculptural form in America before the Revolution; to fashion wooden ornaments for furniture; or to “take likenesses” (paint portraits) on request. Although no examples of eighteenth-century sculpture have been found in the region, evidence for portraiture is more convincing.

After Wilmington was incorporated in 1739-40 and developed as an urban center, itinerant painters must have traveled to the town in search of employment. Although self-trained, their expertise probably would have exceeded that of any local craftsmen-turned-artist. Many came from the northeastern states, making the southern circuit from the spring through the fall, and coming to Wilmington via Fayetteville or New Bern. They advertised in the local newspaper before their arrival, listing an assortment of talents in addition to portrait painting. Versatility was important for earning a livelihood, so the itinerant painter’s accomplishments might range from picture-framing, to teaching drawing, Latin, and French to young ladies or fencing to young men, to teaching dancing to both sexes.

The first recorded itinerant artist in Wilmington was **Fred J. Jocelyn**, who advertised in the *Wilmington Gazette* in 1798 that he would paint “in miniature and also in hair, natural or dissolved no likeness no pay.” Jocelyn and subsequent traveling entrepreneurs must have had a significant impact on the social and cultural life of the population centers they visited. Wilmington and other communities such as Southport,

originally commissioned as Smithville in 1792, would have benefited from their contributions to the intellectual as well as artistic life in the early years.

The 19th Century

Painting in the 19th Century

After the turn of the nineteenth century, the number of traveling artists increased significantly. A large number of portraits of Wilmingtonians survive from this period and remain in the possession of family descendants. J. J. (F. J.) Belanger advertised as a profile taker and painter in the *Wilmington Gazette* on October 20, 1807. The experience of Belanger in Wilmington must have been similar to that of most itinerant painters whose success depended on the relative demand for their services. In 1809, for example, Belanger advertised in the *New Bern Herald* that he would move to New Bern if enough patrons could be found. Yet, in May of the same year, he advertised again that he would stay in Wilmington and teach French. The erratic nature of any patronage made it necessary for such artists to move frequently to more promising locations.

Belanger also called himself “the lodge’s decorator,” meaning probably St. John’s Masonic Lodge on Orange Street. There is general agreement among historians that Belanger painted decorations on the walls of the lodge’s meeting room. Renovation of the room in 1913 revealed evidence of wall paintings. The only preserved section over the fireplace mantel shows a group of Masonic emblems, but old photographs indicate the swag design at the top of the panel once encompassed the whole room. The work was restored by Wilmington artist, Claude Howell in 1943, when the lodge was used as a tavern. The painting, which is still visible, was badly damaged by a hurricane in the mid-1980s, and restored again when the building was being adapted to house the permanent collection of St. John’s Museum of Art. The work clearly deserves recognition as the earliest surviving wall mural in North Carolina.

Another important figure in the artistic life of Wilmington during the early nineteenth century was **William Garle Browne, Jr.** (1823-1894). Born in Leicester, England, the son of a landscape painter, Browne came to America, and by 1840, had exhibited at the National Academy of Design in New York. He appears to have spent much of his time in the South painting portraits in Richmond, Norfolk, and Danville, Virginia, as well as in Charlotte, Raleigh, and New Bern, North Carolina. Wilmington was also apparently one of Browne’s favorite places to visit. The artist settled in New York in 1856, but continued his sojourns to the South. His portraits reflect the changing styles of painting from the middle through the end of the nineteenth century. Browne’s portraits of *Annie Potts Kidder*, *Rachel Troy London*, and *Manger London* are in the permanent collection of the Louise Wells Cameron Museum here in Wilmington. Another of Lucy Wright Murchison Giles is in a private Wilmington collection.

A painter known only as “**Mr. Marsden**” also executed a number of portraits of mid-nineteenth century Wilmingtonians. The likeness of Mrs. Samuel Davis (*nee* Rachel Whitfield Wright), painted about 1846, is one of the most fascinating because of its setting. The background of the portrait contains a view of St. James Episcopal Church as seen from Marsden’s Second Street studio. Marsden also painted the brothers William

Dougald (1844-1945) and John Bruce (1848-1904) MacMillan in a delightful double portrait which is almost primitive in style. The work hangs in a private Wilmington collection.

One of the most fascinating early paintings in Wilmington is the original canvas drop curtain for Thalian Hall, which is now hanging in the first level vestibule of the theater. In an article in the *Wilmington Daily Journal* (13 October 1858) we are told that it is a landscape with figures that depicts “the voyage of the chief persons of the ancient Grecian cities to an island in the Egean [*sic*] Sea, upon which stands one of the many celebrated temples dedicated to Apollo, for the purpose of sacrificing and consulting the oracle previous to the opening of the Olympic Games.” The curtain is by **William Russell Smith** (1812-1896), one of the most celebrated scene painters of the mid-nineteenth century in America. Born in Scotland, Smith settled in Pennsylvania with his family in 1819, and subsequently painted scenery and drop curtains for many other theaters, including the Philadelphia Academy of Music, Edwin Booth’s theater in New York, and the Grand Opera House in Wilmington, Delaware. Smith also painted an allegorical curtain for Thalian Hall which was presented by a group prominent Wilmingtonians as a gift to the city. Such an act on the part of citizens not only represents an infusion of current taste and fashion from the larger centers of culture to the north, but also shows a commitment to the cultural enrichment of Wilmington as a city of growing importance in North Carolina.

Although traveling painters arrived in Wilmington in the decades after the Civil War, by the late nineteenth century, the town and its environs had its own group of resident artists. Most of their paintings have been lost, but the list of artists and their works is lengthy. Among the more notable contributors were **Charles E. Burr and J. A. Milne**, ornamental painters for the Wilmington, Columbia and Augusta Railroad. These gentlemen painted a scene of Glen-Varlock, Scotland on a 21- x 14-foot curtain, which was destined for the new theater in Fayetteville. Burr, who lived in Wilmington, was also credited with repainting scenery for the Opera House (Thalian Hall) in 1881. **E. T. V. Richards** was another scene painter connected with the Opera House. In 1885, he executed scenery for *Crazy Quilt*, a play by John T. Kilham. Other references listed Richards as a painter, artist in stained glass, and engraver. He designed and installed the stained glass windows of the Methodist Episcopal Church on Fifth Street, and also is credited with the design for the redecoration of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church.

Early Contributions by African-American Artists

African-American artists made significant contributions to the cultural life of Wilmington, which were recognized after the Civil War. In 1869, **James H. Harriss**, a policeman by vocation, sketched the ship “Cuba” in port, and later made an oil painting of the same. Constable **Joseph C. Hill**’s principal claim to fame was a huge panorama painted in 1870 for exhibition in Thalian Hall. The work, called *Hill’s Grand Panorama*, was one hundred ninety-eight feet long, and represented “Moses in Egypt, or the Triumphs of Israel.” The exhibition of the painting, featured in various articles in the *Wilmington Morning Star* (19 October 1869-18 January 1870), was accompanied by a live description of each scene by the artist, combining painting and performance, and

using art and entertainment as an adjunct to religious education. It was such a popular event when first presented for the African-American community, that the rest of Wilmington's population flocked to see it on four subsequent occasions. Hill advanced his reputation with other works, such as a sunset view of an Italian bay used as a drop curtain at St. Maria's Hall in the Giblem Lodge. According to the *Wilmington Morning Star* (22 August 1881), which described this work, Hill was "a colored artist of this place who heretofore turned out some very creditable pictures."

Although it provides little concrete information about artists, or descriptions of their work, the first fair for African-Americans in the state was held at the Wilmington Fair Grounds in 1875. Sponsored by *The Colored Industrial Exposition Association*, it included an art exhibition. The *Wilmington Morning Star* provided coverage of the event, including a list of the black artists whose works were displayed at the fair.

Sculpture in the 19th Century

Painting appears to have been the major form of artistic expression in Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear during the nineteenth century. The documentation for sculpture during this period is not much better than it is for the eighteenth. Gravestones and architectural ornaments were still major forms of carving or modeling until well into the nineteenth century. Public sculpture first appeared in 1868, when the Ladies Memorial Association sought subscriptions for a monument to the Confederate dead to be erected in Oakdale Cemetery. A bronze figure of a Confederate soldier forms the focal point of the work. It stands upon a base of North Carolina granite, which is decorated with bas-relief likenesses of General Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. The sculptor was **William Randolph O'Donovan** of Virginia, who maintained a studio in New York, and achieved a national reputation. The Confederate Monument was dedicated with a memorial address on May 10, 1872, "in the presence of interested persons."

The 20th Century

Public Sculpture in the 20th Century

The early 20th century witnessed a marked increase of interest in outdoor public sculpture. The optimism of the new century, Wilmington's continued importance as a port, and its eventual prominence as the hub for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad undoubtedly engendered feelings of self-esteem in the city fathers and citizens. Such civic pride encouraged beautification of the city and its major thoroughfares. Wilmington city planners followed the traditional European format that dates back to the Renaissance and Baroque, and dictates the marking of intersections of major urban thoroughfares with historic monuments and fountains. The first of these was the *Harnett Obelisk* in 1906, erected by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of North Carolina. The obelisk was designed to honor the "colonial heroes of the Lower Cape Fear." Cornelius Harnett (1723-1781), mentioned by name on the monument, enjoyed a long and noteworthy career as a patriot and statesman during the Revolution and the early days of the new republic. It was, therefore, appropriate that the

commemorative obelisk, designed and built by **M. G. Delahunty** of Philadelphia, bear the name of one of Wilmington's most illustrious native sons. The *Harnett Obelisk* is located in the center of Market Street, east of the intersection with Fourth Street.

The standing figure of George Davis, erected between 1909 and 1911, serves as a memorial to another of the city's most famous residents. Davis (1820-1896) was born in New Hanover County and lived most of his life in Wilmington. Although a lawyer by profession, he found his true calling as a politician and champion of the Confederacy. Davis was one of the delegates-at-large who represented North Carolina in the Confederate Provincial Congress. He became attorney general of the Confederacy in 1864, and served until April 1865. At the close of the war, he was arrested and imprisoned, but was freed in the general amnesty decreed by President Andrew Johnson. Davis returned to Wilmington and pursued a successful career at law. The Cape Fear Chapter No. 3 of the United Daughters of the Confederacy commissioned the bronze memorial. Its sculptor, **Frank Packer**, was an artist of national reputation who worked with Daniel Chester French and Henry Bacon on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. The Davis statue is located in the center of Market Street, east of the intersection with Third Street.

The *Confederate Memorial* at the center of South Third Street and the intersection with Dock Street is a superior example of public sculpture among Wilmington's historical monuments. The two figures, representing courage and self-sacrifice, exude that romantic spirit often associated with war. The sculpture was financed with a bequest from Gabriel James Boney, and was dedicated to "the soldiers of the Confederacy." It is another example of the collaboration between the sculptor, Frank Packer, and architect, Henry Bacon. Packer created the bronze figures and Bacon devised the granite pedestal and shaft, which so successfully frame the sculpture. In addition to the Confederate group, Packer was responsible for the T.E. Sprunt monument in Oakdale Cemetery.

Henry Bacon, who spent much of his childhood in Wilmington, is buried in Oakdale Cemetery. As an architect he is best remembered as designer of the Lincoln Memorial mentioned above, but he continued his collaboration with other sculptors like Packer and French as the creator of pedestals and settings for many public monuments. In North Carolina, for example, Bacon joined sculptor Augustus Lukeman to produce the *Monument to the Women of the Confederacy* (1913) on Capitol Square in Raleigh. Bacon, an artist as well, painted the watercolor of St. John's Lodge, which is in the collection of the Louise Wells Cameron Museum.

Of all the public sculpture in Wilmington, the *Kenan Memorial Fountain* (1921) is the most impressive. Following the Baroque tradition, in which a monument often serves as the centerpiece for an intersection of four or more streets, it marks the convergence of Fifth Avenue and Market Street. The fountain forces traffic into a circular pattern, and, at the same time, functions as a beautiful sculptural landmark, which encourages civic pride. Designed by the architectural firm of **Carrere and Hastings**, the fountain was the gift of native Wilmingtonian, William Rand Kenan, Jr., in memory of his parents, William Rand Kenan and Mary Hargrave Kenan. The lowest level of the fountain was removed in 1953 as part of a state highway project to enlarge the intersection, thus leaving the scaled down version, which is visible today.

A wonderful World War I bas-relief, centrally placed at the intersection of 13th and Market streets, was removed when the overhead walkway was constructed at that point. The monument was relocated to the grounds of New Hanover High School. Designed by **J. Maxwell Miller**, the work bears an inscription to the Wilmington dead of World War I. The relief represents the personification of Liberty wearing a modified Phrygian cap, holding a sprig of laurel in her right hand. A shield inscribed with the names of the fallen heroes rests on the ground, balanced by Liberty's left hand.

More recent examples of public sculpture in Wilmington produced in the past several decades include **Horace L. Farlow's** *Cor-Ten Steel Sculpture*, commissioned in 1980 for The Landing, Wrightsville Beach, NC. This wonderful rust-colored abstract work stands front and center among a complex of retail shops, boutiques, and a restaurant just before crossing the bridge to Wrightsville's barrier island. Horace Farlowe (1933-2006) was professor of art at The University of Georgia Lamar Dodd School of Art, Athens, GA from 1979-2000. A native of North Carolina, Farlowe enjoyed the status of artist in residence at a number of NC academic institutions, and is best remembered for his large-scale outdoor sculptures in marble, bronze, and cor-ten steel.

Two delightful sculptures by **Al Frega** may be seen in public spaces around Wilmington. Both are fountains, constructed out of found metal objects. One graces a small pocket park at the entrance to the Wilmington Public Library downtown, and the other is located in the **New Hanover County Arboretum** on Oleander Drive. Frega taught courses at UNCW before leaving Wilmington, and also maintained a studio at Acme Art. The sculptor is currently active in public art projects in the Triangle area, and has complete works for public buildings in Durham and Chapel Hill, as well as a project for the State Buildings in Raleigh.

The Arboretum has several other metal sculptures in copper that are worthy of mention. A delightful frog sculpture, created by Wilmington artist **Andy Cobb**, and looking real enough to croak, decorates the Gathering Garden. **Dumay Gorham** also created a turtle sculpture for the water garden, but his wonderful sea serpent, undulating in the water garden, really steals the limelight.

The North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher has a multitude of sculptures in its garden and exhibit areas. Several works by **Michael van Hout** decorate the Aquarium's interior. In the marine building a massing of almost 200 metal sculpted Spanish mackerel circle from the ceiling of the marine building down into the aquarium's Open Ocean Gallery, located on the ground floor, creating the impression of a great school of fish. Metal spadefish hang above the exhibit "Shadows on the Sand," which depicts creatures living on sand flats, thus creating an extension in mid-air of the installation below. Throughout the aquarium marine building van Hout's metal fish hang in schools, giving the visitors the feeling of actually being immersed in an ocean environment themselves, while they experience the exhibits of marine life. In addition to the creations of professional artists, visitors are treated to a revolving exhibit of original works by artists of all ages in the Spadefish Gallery.

Other sculptures at the Aquarium include a wonderful interactive work of a fiddle crab, created from fiberglass and foam by **Dumay Gorham**, and a series of six bronze sculptures by wildlife artist **David Turner**: a great blue heron, entwined otters, a mallard duck, all beautifully incorporated into the Memorial Garden. For the reflective pool at the

aquarium's entrance, Turner also created metal Atlantic spadefish, swimming in an aquatic environment.

Thalian Hall, in downtown Wilmington, houses an amazing work by New York artist, Dorothy Gillespie. A coruscating cascade of undulating metal strips coalesce to form *Colorfalls, 1989* in the fifteen-foot-wide atrium of the theater's lobby. The work is 42 feet high by 11 feet wide and almost completely fills the left wall of the atrium from ceiling to floor. The staircase and balconies afford a variety of angles for viewing, and a skylight above the sculpture creates a changing environment of illumination. The work was created in the artist's New York studio for an invitational exhibition in Montreal, Canada, sponsored by Alcan. Later it was adapted to fit within the Thalian atrium. The curling ribbons and tendrils of colored metal create the impression of waves and rivulets falling and spreading as they descend toward the floor.

In 2003, a competition was held at **Airlie Gardens**, a county park in Wilmington, to create a memorial garden in honor of outsider artist Minnie Evans. Airlie is the garden where Evans worked as a gatekeeper for 40 years. The winner, Virginia Wright-Frierson selected and managed a team of seven artists, each of whom created their own sculptures. The group included Karen Crouch, Dumay Gorham, Brooks Koff, Hiroshi Sueyoshi, and Michael van Hout, all local artists, along with guest artist Tejuola Turner. **Barbara Sullivan**, author of *Garden Perennials for the Coastal South*, landscaped the gardens and bushes around the site. The year-long construction of the project, supported by the help of many volunteers, resulted in a beautiful garden full of sculpture and mosaics. □ Wright-Frierson created the garden's centerpiece, the **Airlie Gardens Bottle Chapel** made of various colored bottles set in mortar over rebar and treated wood posts to form a 7-sided chapel, measuring 17 feet high and 17 feet across in all directions. When lit at night, the glowing chapel is reminiscent of the effect of huge stained glass windows. Although architectural in design, the chapel creates the feeling of a huge glass sculpture set into the surrounding park landscape.

Two angels in various metallic materials by **Dumay Gorham** flank the entrance to the Bottle Chapel. Minnie often stated that her inspiration came from "the Angel that stands by me," and angels appear frequently in her work. At night, when the garden is lit, the angels take on an ethereal quality that adds greatly to the mysterious beauty of the space.

Hiroshi Sueyoshi created a bubbling ceramic fountain for the surrounding garden that is covered with relief images of plants, flowers, and faces so often found in Evans' work. Sueyoshi is also responsible for the ceramic relief at the garden's entrance that shows Minnie Evans at the window of the little green gatehouse that she occupied for so many years as gatekeeper of Airlie Gardens.

Karen Crouch is responsible for the marvelous metalwork tree that grows within the chapel, and **Michael van Hout** has created a flock of metal birds, which perch in the tree. Crouch also fabricated the wonderful horned and winged beast just inside the garden entrance. This work is based on the "funny green animal" that is featured in many of Evans' paintings, and seems to be a composite of plant and animal forms.

Brooks Koff engaged the talents of school children to create the many mosaic stepping-stones that surround the Bottle Chapel. Brooks is also responsible for the spiral

mosaic floor of the chapel, as well as the retaining wall and benches, which are part of the garden.

Detroit-born **Tejuola Turner** was invited as guest-artist by Frierson to participate in the garden's design. Turner adapted the Nigerian craft of carving gourds by using power tools to carve designs on the surface of gourds. Her motifs range from figurative to geometrical, to serpentine. For the Evans memorial project, Turner made another leap and translated gourd designs into triangular concrete seats that are located in the garden. These pieces are deeply carved like the gourds, with swirling designs reminiscent of those by Evans, and colored in rich greens and blue-greens. Four other triangular seats are covered with ceramic tiles, cowry shells, and stones. The latter provided places for visitors to rest and view the memorial from a shaded spot outside the garden.

The Bottle Chapel and its sculpture garden at Airlie Gardens has become one of the major public attractions in Wilmington. *A Tribute to Minnie Evans: The Bottle Chapel at Airlie Gardens* authored by Fred Wharton, with Introduction and Epilogue by local historian, Susan Taylor Bloch, has become the definitive pictorial guide to the memorial. Published in 2008 by the Publishing Laboratory of the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, it provides an in-depth account of the design and creation of this wonderful artistic tribute and treasure.

Public sculpture in southeastern North Carolina has become an even more important concern as we enter the 21st century. One of its most recent and exciting manifestations is a program that involves temporary installation of sculptures in various locations in and around Wilmington. The **Pedestrian Art Program** is the brainchild of local photographer, Matthew Dols, and is sponsored by *Creative Wilmington* in partnership with the City of Wilmington Downtown Services, and Mayfaire Town Center. It is a public sculpture program intended to serve as an economic, cultural, and visual stimulus for New Hanover County region.

Sculptures are chosen for display by an Advisory Board / Selection Committee for placement on the Riverwalk, at the entrances to the scenic walkway along the Cape Fear riverfront, the historic Post Office on North Front Street, the median strip at Front and Market Street, Bijou Park located on the 200 block of North Front Street, and at Mayfaire Town Center. The vision of the Pedestrian Art Program is to “view public art as integral to a community's fabric by recognizing the potential of art to create livable cities, enhance neighborhood identity, strengthen economic development and tourism, educate children and adults, and enrich the spirit and pride of its citizens.” More about past and present exhibitions, locations and maps may be found on the project's website at <http://www.pedestrianart.com>.

Sculpture at UNCW

Recently, the **University of North Carolina, Wilmington** recognized the importance of outdoor sculpture as an enhancement to building entrances and campus walkways. The university's mascot, the Seahawk, is visibly perched outside the entrance to **Warwick Center** on campus, and forms the focal point for a small landscaped area

with seating. The realistic bronze sculpture was created by **Joe Orlando** and given to the University by the Residence Hall Association.

Raleigh sculptor, **Thomas Sayre**, designed another work that creates a microenvironment in front of Dobo Hall on Chancellor's Walk. In 1980, with architect **Steve Schuster**, Sayre co-founded *Clearscapes*, a multi-disciplinary design firm that has created environments for children's museums, and medical facilities including an oncology ambulatory surgery center, as well as handling historic renovations, and both public and private art commissions. Sayre's work for Dobo Hall, called *Khan's Garden*, consists of a series of abstract forms inspired by passages from Thomas Coleridge's unfinished poem, *Kubla Khan; or, A Vision in a Dream*. The phrase, "measureless to man" from the poem, can be seen in brass letters embedded in the walk, which is part of the garden-like environment. More about the sculptor and his design firm may be found at: <http://www.clearscapes.com>.

There are several outdoor sculptures on the grounds of the **Cultural Arts Building**. *Pivot*, a sculpture by artist **Carl Billingsley** was purchased in 2008 by the department of art and art history in conjunction with the College of Arts and Sciences, and placed at the main entrance to the Cultural Arts Building.

Another metal sculpture by Billingsley, assembled by art students working with the artist, stands at entrance to the Performance wing of Cultural Arts. This project was concurrent with an exhibition of the artist's work in the CAB art gallery and his four day residency in the art and art history department. Under the supervision of Andi Steele, who teaches 3D design and sculpture, the students painted the work according to Billingsley's specifications.

An untitled student work by **Mike Futch**, the product of a project in a studio art sculpture class, is mounted at the entrance to the academic wing of the Cultural Arts Building. A terracotta portrait of Claude Howell, the art department's founder, completes the list of works visible in and around the Cultural Arts Building. This portrait is on display at the entrance to the building's art gallery.

The renovation of **Burney Center** on the UNCW campus presented the opportunity for a sculptural installation in the center's lobby. Again done by art students in the fall 2007 Beginning Sculpture Class under the direction of Professor Andi Steele, the *Untitled Steel Sculpture* creates a wonderful focal point on the wall at the entrance to the meeting rooms in the building.

The new **Computer Information Systems Building** has an outdoor sculpture, *Soaring Seahawk*, by **Dumay Gorham**. Paul Boney of Boney Associates donated this work.

Randall Library on the campus of UNCW has several of Michael van Hout's sculptures, including a group of wire fish hanging in the main stairwell and a wire giraffe and zebra on view under the sky light. **Michael van Hout** is a Wilmington artist who earned his B.F.A. from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro in 1979. Using found materials, wire, sheet metal and copper, van Hout fabricates marvelous metal sculptures of animals and marine life. The artist's work is widely praised for its tremendous variety as he explores the many possibilities of shape, scale and color found in his models from the animal kingdom. He has also imagined and realized several major installations in the North Carolina Aquariums at Fort Fisher and Pine Knoll Shores.

Painting, Printmaking, and Crafts in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Although Wilmington has had its share of notable painters since its founding in 1739, this category of the visual arts experienced exponential expansion in the twentieth century. For the last several decades, the city has become a haven for many painters in a wide variety of media. Even so, there have been a number of figures in early part of the century who deserve consideration.

Among artists who lived and worked in the region were **Elizabeth McGee Breazeale** (d. 1927) and **Mary Lyde Hicks Williams** (1866-1959). A native of Mt. Olive, Breazeale maintained an active studio and directed the artistic life of her hometown. Her painting of *Rebecca at the Well*, in a private collection suggests that she was interested in biblical themes. The career of Mary Lyde Hicks Williams, originally from Faison, really spans two centuries. Most of her adult life was spent in Raleigh, where she painted the portraits of jurists and philanthropists, which decorate the walls of the capitol building. Her work is also represented in the Confederate Museum of Richmond, Virginia. Although portraiture seems to have been her strong point, she painted a number of images depicting the life of African-Americans on southern plantations. One such work titled *Corn Shucking in the Moonlight* is in the collection of the North Carolina Museum of History. Paintings such as this firmly link Williams with the antebellum plantation life, which she was born too late to experience.

Margaret Walthour Lippitt (1872-1964) came to Wilmington in 1894 to live in the Lippitt family home on South Second Street. When her husband's career took them to Europe early in the twentieth century, she maintained a studio in Bremen, German; later she studied etching in Paris. After her husband's death in 1934, Lippitt went to live in New York. During her time in Wilmington, she met Elisabeth Augusta Chant, and the two women became close friends. Drawings by Lippitt's students were found in the rafters of St. John's Lodge when it was being restored.

Margaret Lippitt encouraged a young Wilmingtonian named **Vollian Burr Rann** (1904-1956), who later earned membership in the National Academy of Art in New York City. Rann eventually settled in New York, wintering there and spending summers in Provincetown, MA. His reputation is based on his New England coastal scenes and his strong painterly portraits, which include one of author Eugene O'Neill. In fact, Rann was elected president of the "Beachcombers Club" of which O'Neill was a member. It was a famous watering hole for prominent New England artists and writers. On his frequent visits to Wilmington, Rann painted portraits of *Elisabeth Chant* (c. 1925) and *Bishop Thomas C. Darst* (c. 1935), both in the collection of the Louise Wells Cameron Museum.

Samuel Brown, Jr. was another Wilmingtonian who, like Rann, was destined to seek his fortune away from his hometown. Brown was born in 1907 and moved with his family to Philadelphia in 1917. He graduated from the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art (now Philadelphia College of Art) in 1930, and later received his master of fine arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania. The director of the Philadelphia Museum, Fiske Kimball, appointed Brown to work on the federal Public Works Art Project (PWAP) for Philadelphia in 1933. The artist was one of the few African-Americans who participated in the national art program. After the Great Depression, Brown enjoyed a long and prolific career in Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey as an

art teacher in the technical high schools of those cities, finally retiring in 1971. His paintings such as *The Lynching*, c. 1934 (Philadelphia Museum of Art), fall into the category of social commentary, and deal frankly with the unequal treatment of African-Americans in the United States.

Ruth Faison Shaw, a Kenansville native, who considered Wilmington her home, spent most of her career outside southeastern North Carolina. After World War I, during which she served with the Y.M.C.A. in France, she went to Rome where she maintained a studio and a school for British and American children for ten years. Soon after she returned to America she initiated the Shaw Finger Painting Studio in New York. Her book on the subject, published in 1934, became the basis for juvenile psychotherapy and analysis. In 1959 Shaw accepted a position with the department of psychiatry at Memorial Hospital in Chapel Hill, where finger painting was used as a diagnostic tool. Shaw's contributions to art, education, and medical science enriched not just the Lower Cape Fear, but society as a whole. One of her own finger paintings, *Fantasia* (1941), in a private collection, was created for her young niece after seeing the Walt Disney film of the same title.

Elisabeth Augusta Chant (1862-1947), although not a daughter of the South, exerted a tremendous influence on her adopted community. She arrived in Wilmington in 1922. In her book *Two Centuries of Art in New Hanover County* (1976), Croquette Hewlett wrote that Chant was "a quiet, calm, elderly woman, a little unconventional looking perhaps, but certainly no one seeing her would have believed the impact she would have upon the city which she had chosen for her new home." Once ensconced in the old wine house on Cottage Lane, which she transformed into her studio, she became mentor to a whole generation of Wilmington artists, including Henry and Helen MacMillan, Claude Howell, Hester Donnelly, Delbert Palmer, and Peggy Hall. Chant's quiet charisma energized the Wilmington art scene, and she often spoke of her intention to found an art colony here. In 1923, she was instrumental in the formation of the Art League, which became a moving force in the social and artistic life of the city for some years. When she was not crusading for art, Chant pursued a career in painting. The Levi Hart wine house, in which she painted and taught, was a favorite subject on canvas. Among Chant's most popular works in the permanent collection of the Louise Wells Cameron Museum are *Parsifal*, c. 1907 and *Live Oak, Pelican Point*, c. 1925.

Irene Price (1900-1971), a former Wilmington schoolteacher, was studying at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C., when Elisabeth Chant encouraged her to continue the pursuit of her dream to become a full-time portrait painter. Price, who painted for a time in Chant's studio, soon established her own, and also taught many of Chant's early students. Between 1931 and 1936, Price maintained the Art Center on the corner of Front and Chestnut streets where she carried on the tradition of the then semi-retired Chant. Eventually, Price left Wilmington for Raleigh, and later for Blowing Rock, NC, where she worked successfully as a portraitist. Price executed portraits of many prominent North Carolinians. Two of her works, *Interior of Elisabeth Chant's Studio* and *Still Life With Japanese Magnolias*, are in the permanent collection of the Cameron Museum in Wilmington.

Another of Elisabeth Chant's students, **Henry Jay MacMillan**, played an important role in the cultural history of the Lower Cape Fear. Born in Wilmington in

1908, MacMillan left his hometown at the age of eighteen to study at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art. After several years of travel and study in Europe and America, he became an interior designer in New York and Washington, a career that he pursued for the next seven years. When he returned to Wilmington he became involved in the art scene statewide, while aspiring to be an independent artist. In one of his first shows, he and Claude Howell exhibited their work at the Cape Fear Hotel in April 1938. In the same year, MacMillan thrust himself into the artistic life of his birthplace with an active crusade for the creation of the Wilmington Museum of Art. When it opened in November, he was named director of the museum's art school. During World War II, while serving his country, MacMillan produced a series of watercolors. Upon completion of his military service, he studied at the Art Students League in New York, and taught drawing and painting for the next ten years at the Parsons School of Design. In 1956, MacMillan returned to Wilmington and was an important force in the city's cultural life until his death in 1991. In his own work, he concentrated on portraiture, landscapes and flowers. His *Portrait of Boot*, c. 1940, in the Cameron Museum collection, is a sensitive pastel study of a young African-American woman.

Hester C. Donnelly (1912-1992), another Wilmington native and a contemporary of Henry MacMillan, also played a significant role in the area's cultural history. She studied with Elisabeth Chant and Irene Price. Donnelly tirelessly promoted the arts in Wilmington. With Virginian Hamilton MacQueen, she was co-director of the Artists' Gallery. She taught art classes for many years at St. John's Museum, and served as president of the Wilmington Art Association.

Of all the contemporary artists born in Wilmington, perhaps **Claude Flynn Howell** (1915-1997) has earned the most widespread renown. As did many others, Howell began his training under the direction of Elisabeth Chant and Irene Price. He studied with other artists in New England and Woodstock, NY, won a Rosenfeld Fellowship in 1948, which allowed a year of study in New York, and followed that experience with a year in Paris and another traveling in Europe.

In 1956, after teaching a night art class at Wilmington College, he was asked to establish a department of art. When the college became the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Howell chaired the department, which later was authorized to confer a bachelor of creative arts degree. In 1970, Howell inaugurated an archive of North Carolina art and artists at the university. The project was funded by the North Carolina Arts Council in 1974, and has continued to grow and gain a national reputation under the guidance of the Randall Library staff at UNCW.

In addition, Howell served as a member of the North Carolina State Arts Society on the advisory council, as chairman of the Visual Arts Panel on the North Carolina Arts Council, and as a member of the Board of Directors of St. John's Museum of Art. As a painter, Howell established an international reputation, which would need much more space than could be devoted to it here to do it justice.

His light-filled maritime paintings and scenes of life in coastal North Carolina are unsurpassed demonstrations of an ability to capture the genre's essence with a unique style that is earthy and, at the same time, sophisticated. A number of Howell's works may be found in the collections of the Louise Wells Cameron Museum and the University of

North Carolina, Wilmington, as well as in many private collections throughout the region.

No essay dealing with art or cultural history can be written without including the contributions of **Minnie Evans** (1892-1987). For over twenty-five years she was gatekeeper of Airlie Gardens, and occupied her time making drawings based on her visionary religious experiences. Evans does not fit into the mainstream of twentieth-century American art. Her lack of formal education, and a life deprived of the cultural advantages of middle- and upper-class society, left her essentially unaware of major artistic traditions in the world of art. She belonged to a vernacular tradition of painting. Her works were inspired by episodic dreams and visions based on strong religious convictions.

Since her death in 1987, her art has been recognized beyond local and state boundaries as an important expression of the southern African-American rural experience. Most of her works are unnamed, but no less powerful for lack of descriptive titles. Many of her paintings include complex colorful floral designs, animal forms, and mask-like images, which are related to her love of the flora and fauna of Airlie Gardens, as well as African masks and sculpture of her ethnic heritage.

Examples of her paintings and crayon drawings may be found in the Louise Wells Cameron Museum, and in the homes of many Wilmingtonians who knew her during her time at Airlie Gardens. Evans' work has also increasingly become part of larger collections in America and abroad, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In recent years, Wilmington and southeastern North Carolina have continued to benefit from the presence of artists of great talent. Some are native to the area, while others have come to the region to pursue careers in art, or with art as a passion outside of their regular professions. Many are members of the Wilmington Art Association, or of artists' organizations in surrounding counties. The fact remains that individual histories of their accomplishments would take too much space in such brief account. Therefore, only a few of the most prominent artists, whose contributions are well known throughout the community, can be mentioned.

Sam Bissette (1921-2005) was born in Wilson, NC, but lived in Wilmington from 1936 until the time of his death. His interests were many and included astronomy, photography, and North Carolina history. Bissette's career was in banking, but in 1970, he began painting and chose watercolor as his principle medium. Over the years the artist served as a trustee of the North Carolina Museum of Art, a director of the North Carolina Art Society, a director of the North Carolina Watercolor Society, and president of Saint John's Museum of Art in Wilmington. The American Watercolor Society and *American Artist* magazine have recognized Bissette's work nationally.

His work is represented in collections in forty-seven states and a number of foreign countries. In addition to his wonderful watercolor scenes of life across the Tar Heel State, and depictions of North Carolina history, Bissette is well known in Wilmington as the designer of the mosaic scenes, which decorate the entrances to the original Belk Store in Westfield Mall. Two of his major preoccupations, science and photography, led to the creation of the sixty-painting exhibition, *The Universe According*

to Earth (1989), depicting astronomical objects and principles as well as space science, which he eventually donated to the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. This series is now on display in Dobo Hall. *Images from the Micro World* (1991), is a series of thirty-four paintings and drawings based on the artist's microscopic observation of household chemicals and objects that he then photographed. This collection was also donated to the university, and is on display in the faculty office area of the Watson School of Education. Bissette's son, David, maintains detailed website that features work of the artist: <http://sambissette.com/>.

Ann Conner is another of Wilmington's foremost artists. She has been on the faculty of the art and art history department at UNCW since 1974. Conner earned her M.F.A. from UNC-Chapel Hill, and returned to her hometown to become one of the first members of the newly established department, chaired by Claude Howell. Over the years, Conner has taught various drawing and painting classes, both beginning and advanced. One of her own courses in Conceptual Drawing has become a favorite of students in recent years, and speaks to Conner's personal creative impulse. The artist works primarily in the print medium, using non-endangered wood as the foundation for her woodcuts. Employing the intrinsic grain of the wood as part of her composition, Conner creates brightly colored conceptual pieces. Her images are defined by hard-edged abstraction, color and shape, which create intricate and sophisticated patterns, sometime symmetrical, sometimes not, printed on a variety of textured papers. Conner has the following to say about her work: "Working in woodcut is always a challenge as the grain of the wood is so captivating. My woodcuts are, in many ways, a response to this. I like carving into the natural flat wood, however using high-tech power carver, or laser cutting blocks. Woodcut is the oldest form of printmaking, and it continues to have relevance for me."

The artist's work has been featured in many national and international juried shows. Recent exhibitions include Troisième Triennale du Bois Gravé Contemporain, Musée Pierre Noël, Saint-Dié-des-Voges, France, 2007; Westwood and Other Recent Works, Flatbed Press, Austin, TX, 2007; North American Print Biennial, Boston, 2007; New Editions 2006/Summer: COLOR, International Print Center, NYC; New Editions 2005/Winter, IPCNY; 79th Annual Print Competition at the Print Center in Philadelphia, PA in 2005; Cool Intentions, SomerHill Gallery, Chapel Hill, NC 2004; and Logs + Park, Trish Higgins Fine Art, Wichita, KS, 2002. Conner has also created collaborative editions at Flatbed Press in Austin, TX, The Grenfell Press in New York City, and at Center Street Studio, Boston.

Her work is represented in over forty major museum and corporate print collections in the U. S. including Philip Morris NY; IBM; Citigroup, NY; New York Public Library; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Library of Congress; Credit Suisse First Boston, London; RJR Nabisco; Chemical Bank, NY; and Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, NC, the Cameron Museum, Wilmington, NC, and Randall Library, UNCW. More about the artist and examples of her work may be found on the Creative Wilmington website at: http://www.creativewilmington.com/member_detail.php?id=822.

Elizabeth Darrow has been a prominent figure in Wilmington artist circles for many years. Although painting is one of her principle mediums, she is particularly well

known for her collages. Darrow thinks of herself as working in the tradition of Abstract Expressionism, and concentrates on the process of creating. Her works are revealed in a complex layering of color and brush strokes that ultimately evolve into images that satisfy her visually and aesthetically. She says, "My paintings, as well as collages, emerge from the process itself, rather than from any preconceived plan of mine."

The artist has won numerous awards, and her work is represented in many private and public collections including: SAS Institute, Research Triangle Park, NC, Duke Hospital, Durham, NC, R.J. Reynolds, Winston-Salem, NC, and the Cameron Museum in Wilmington, NC. Darrow maintains a website at: <http://www.elizabethdarrowart.com/>.

Long important on the local and state art scene is **Harry Davis**, who over the past twenty or more years has become a familiar name among painters native to southeastern North Carolina. Davis is a self-taught artist with amazing natural ability. In his hometown of Wilmington, he began drawing and sketching as a child. After an accidental shooting in 1970, while serving in the 82nd Airborne Division of the U.S. Army, he found a means of healing and self-expression in oil painting. Attention to detail and bright, bold colors are among his trademarks in works whose subject matter ranges from African tribal, to boxing, to African American musicians and celebrities, and striking images drawn from the African American religious tradition.

Original oils, hand-pulled serigraphs, and *Giclée* prints are available for sale on his website, and many of his works are already in the private collections of actors and other public figures across the nation. Randall Library, on the campus of UNCW, is proud to have one of Davis' recent originals in its collection. In an unidentified news article, Davis says of his work, "I'm not trying to say anything philosophical or profound in my paintings . . . but if anyone who views my artwork perceives a message or statement, then at least I know they have been affected in some way. That's all an artist can ask for." More about Davis' work and accomplishments may be accessed on his website at: <http://www.davisartstudio.com/>.

Donald Furst has been a member of the UNCW art faculty since 1985, and has also served as the chair of the department of art and art history. The artist is a printmaker specializing in mezzotint and other forms of intaglio printmaking. Furst earned his M.A. and M.F.A. in printmaking with Mauricio Lasansky, University of Iowa, 1977, 1978, and taught at two other institutions of higher learning before coming to Wilmington. Although he has experimented with a number of printmaking processes, mezzotint appears to be his favorite.

Furst concentrates on images that feature dark, sumptuous textures in velvety tones that lead the eye from shadowy interiors toward brightly lighted spaces. Other prints focus on stairways and ladders that have no real place in time and space, but suggest mysterious and unknown destinations. In both cases, the everyday settings give the viewer a feeling of beginning a journey, or being caught between two states of being, which may or may not find ultimate resolution. The artist's own statement, "There is mystery in the mundane," may give some clue as to his intention.

Furst has received the following recognitions for teaching: University of North Carolina Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1999; University Distinguished Professorship, UNCW, 1996-98; Board of Trustees Teaching Excellence Award, UNCW, 1996; College of Arts and Sciences Excellence in Teaching, UNCW, 1992. □□He has received the

North Carolina Visual Artists Fellowship twice, first in 1996, and again in 2007. He was also awarded a North Carolina Arts Council Artist's Project Grant in 1994.

The artist has shown his work in numerous national and international exhibitions, including the International Print Triennial, Krakow, Poland; Norwegian International Print Triennial; Sapporo International Print Biennial in Japan, the Macedonia International Print Triennial, and the British International Miniature Print Exhibition. Furst's work is represented in many private and public collections, and in museum collections such as the Fogg Art Museum; Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri; State of Hawaii Foundation on Culture and the Arts; Pratt Graphics Center, New York; the Cameron Museum, Wilmington, NC, and the collection of the Randall Library, UNCW. The artist also currently operates Ars Longa Press, a fine print atelier. Examples of his own work may be viewed on the **Creative Wilmington** website at:

http://www.creativewilmington.com/member_detail.php?id=102%0D

Ivey Hayes, who was born and raised in eastern North Carolina, earned a B.A. from North Carolina Central University, and an M.F.A. from The University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Hard work and perseverance have paid off with over a thirty-year career in art, which has given Hayes high recognition on both the regional and national scene. His work has been exhibited throughout the state and in solo shows in New York City, Brooklyn, NY, and Washington D.C.

Hayes has developed a signature style, which emphasizes bright colors and is full of expression and movement. His realistic watercolors deal with scenes from the area in which he was raised, but his more recent acrylics are marked by bold colors, which portray rural dockside scenes and more abstract images of people in motion. Rural America, coastal scenes, dancers and musicians, and religious themes are also among Hayes' subjects. The artist commands high prices for his original acrylics, but his work is also available in the form of *giclée* prints from a variety of sources. Hayes states, "My signature painting reflects life's experiences. This shows who I really am... my heart and soul." For more information about Ivey Hayes consult his website at:

<http://www.iveyhayesart.com/>.

One premier artist in the world of crafts, **Billie Ruth Sudduth**, began her career in art while living in Wilmington. She began with a class in basket making in 1983, while still employed as a school psychologist in the New Hanover County school system. By 1989, Sudduth had become so involved in basketry that she left her first career to establish a second, and never looked back. The artist discovered the work of the thirteenth century mathematician, Fibonacci, while teaching a "Math in a Basket" class in a middle school. Fibonacci discovered that certain proportions occur regularly in natural forms such as the spirals in seashells, and patterns in flowers and leaves. Sudduth incorporated Fibonacci numbers and "The Nature Sequence" in the design of her baskets, creating a unique look that caught the attention of collectors and museum curators.

The artist's work is included in many corporate, private, and museum collections including the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, the Museum of Art and Design in New York, and the Asheville Art Museum in North Carolina. Sudduth's teaching experience encompasses classes and workshops taught at Penland School of Craft in

North Carolina, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, TN, the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, and our own Cameron Museum in Wilmington. Exhibitions include multiple juried acceptances to The Smithsonian Craft Show, Washington, D.C., as well as numerous regional and national invitational exhibitions.

In 1997, the artist was the first woman to receive the *North Carolina Living Treasure* Award sponsored by UNCW. Billie Ruth Sudduth says she “feels one of her contributions to the field has been getting baskets off the floor and onto pedestals.” She describes her baskets as “being made to hold your interest, not your objects.” More about the artist’s work and accomplishments may be found on her website at:

<http://www.brsbasket.com/>.

Hiroshi Sueyoshi is one of the regions true treasures. Recipient of the *North Carolina Living Treasure* Award in 2006, presented by the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Sueyoshi has influenced the lives of several generations of ceramic artists in southeastern North Carolina. Born in Tokyo, Japan, the artist has studied extensively with Japanese ceramic masters such as Masanao Narui, Daisei-Gama in Mashiko, Japan, and Teruo Hara of the Kobo Group in Warrenton, VA. Sueyoshi has himself attained the status of a master in the oriental tradition of pottery and porcelain in a career spanning over thirty years in North Carolina. He has worked with Seagrove Pottery as a production potter and with the Sampson Community College in Clinton as a pottery instructor. From 1976 to 1980 he worked as a visiting artist at Wilson County Technical Institute and at Cape Fear Community College in a program sponsored by the North Carolina Arts Council. More recently Sueyoshi has taught at Cape Fear Community College in a program sponsored by the North Carolina Arts Council. He is currently the Artist in Residence at the Pancoe Art Center of the Louise Wells Cameron Museum in Wilmington, NC, where offers classes and workshops.

Sueyoshi’s work is represented in public and private collections nationally and internationally, and may also be found in the Randall Library collection at UNCW. More about the artist and examples of his work may be see on the **Creative Wilmington** website at:

http://www.creativewilmington.com/member_detail.php?name=Hiroshi%20Sueyoshi&id=416.

Ceramic artist, **Gayle Tustin**, maintains a 1500 square foot studio in Wilmington. She studied ceramics at Penn State University and Alfred University in Alfred, NY, and was the first student to graduate with Honors in Studio Art from UNCW. Tustin has received numerous awards for her work including the YWCA Woman of Achievement in the Arts, a *North Carolina Emerging Artist* Grant, and several invitations to study and work at international art colonies in Macedonia and Germany. As a result of her exposure to art colonies in Macedonia, she became co-founder and co-director of the **No Boundaries, Inc.**, Wilmington’s own biennial international art colony held on Bald Head Island. Tustin’s work is has been exhibited and is represented in collections throughout North Carolina, as well as nationally and internationally. In addition to her personal work, the artist has completed a number of public art projects which include the beautiful *Celebration of Life* murals at the Lower Cape Fear Hospice. Tustin has also created three

representational wall relief murals for the Forsyth Medical Center, Novant Health, Winston-Salem, NC, and has worked with the children of the St. Mary School and Montessori in Wilmington to realize a series of monumental tile murals. Although she is well known for her ceramic art, Tustin also works in mixed media, oil, and India ink.

Of her own work and creative process, Tustin says, "I find myself being an engineer of artistic ideas frequently fueled from travels in foreign places as well as my own backyard." More about the artist may be found on the **Creative Wilmington** website at: http://creativewilmington.net/member_detail.php?id=73.

Virginia Wright-Frierson has been an important part of Wilmington's artist community since her husband, Dargan Frierson, became a member of the faculty at UNCW in 1977. She has drawn, painted and written from the time she was a child, but as an adult has broadened her horizons to include glass and cement sculpture, children's books, collage, linocut, huge murals, tributes, and teaching. Wright-Frierson earned her B.F.A. degree in painting from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, and furthered her studies in Cortona, Italy, New York and Arizona. She has shown her art in over thirty exhibitions in the southeastern United States as well as Italy, and her work is included in museum, private, and corporate collections. The artist has illustrated several children's books, including: *A Desert Scrapbook*, *An Island Scrapbook*, and *A North American Rainforest*.

Wright-Frierson has completed numerous public commissions, including a mural at Columbine High School, one year after the shootings there in 1999. Her design was chosen by a panel consisting of parents, teachers, and students, and a consensus of the architects, to cover the ceiling of the new atrium that took the place of the pre-existing cafeteria. The mural is composed of 20 acrylic canvases, including one 20'x 24' centerpiece, applied to suspended panels. The murals form an overhead view of indigenous trees that rise in perspective giving the viewer the feeling of being deep inside a sunlit forest. The effect is very like the dramatic perspective of many European Baroque ceiling paintings of the 17th century.

In 2002, the artist won a commission from Savannah College of Art and Design for their exhibition "In Response: Memorial Commissions. A Memorial Tribute Exhibition Honoring the Victims and Heroes of September 11." She has also received several commissions from local organizations including the Wilmington Public Library and the Wilmington Children's Museum. The mural for the latter is especially interesting because it is in the same room as the Masonic mural above the fireplace in St. John's Lodge, attributed to J.J. Belanger in the early 19th century. Wright-Frierson's mural, containing the theme of hills, rivers, and a forested landscape on both flanking walls, creates an entirely new setting for the mural, and an interesting connection with it as her stream and mountain range appear to merge with those at the center of the 19th century painting.

Wright-Frierson's most popular public work, the Minnie Evans *Bottle Chapel* at Airlie Gardens is discussed above under public sculpture. The artist says of her motivation and creative impulse, "I will always draw and paint and write as long as I can remember." Additional information about the artist and her work may be found on her website at: <http://home.att.net/~vmwf/>.

Art Institutions and Advocates

Institutions

Many art groups and associations have been formed in the twentieth-century to support and promote the visual arts. Without their help, artists might well have struggled in isolation for recognition. These institutions have greatly enriched the culture of the region, and continue to provide an underpinning for the evolution of the visual arts.

The **Wilmington chapter of the North Carolina Sorosis**, a women's club, was one of the first groups to take an interest in the visual arts. Organized in 1895, it was composed of three departments---home science, literature, and art. The art department was devoted to the promotion of visual art in the public schools, and the development of art appreciation among its members. For example, when **Ruth Faison Shaw** was chairperson of the Sorosis art department from 1911-13, she offered a study of Greek art, and provided lessons in drawing for members and interested citizens. During the 1930s, the North Carolina Sorosis sponsored a state exhibition held in Wilmington, beginning the annual *North Carolina Exhibition*, which traveled the whole state. The clubwomen exerted a tremendous influence on the community. For example, the Penny Art Fund, begun by Mrs. Arrington, gave New Hanover High School its first original oil painting, a seascape by the New York artist, Frederick Waugh. Wilmington Sorosis continues today in active support of the visual arts in programming and outreach to the community.

The **Art League** was an outgrowth of Elisabeth Chant's interest in creating an art colony in Wilmington. The first meeting was held at the Orton Hotel on July 19, 1923, with fifty people in attendance. The organization immediately mounted an art exhibit for the Southeastern Fair in October 1923, which was held at Greenfield Terrace. After several years of meeting, at the Orton, Miss Chant's studio, and a number of local exhibitions in various places, the league gradually faded out of existence.

In 1937, **Ethel Williams** proposed an art museum for Wilmington on the grounds that the city was one hundred miles from any other art museum, had some of the state's most serious artists as residents, and had long been a gathering place of visiting artists. Williams, an art historian, piqued the interest of the city council and secured a promise of financial support. A \$5000 fund raising campaign was launched, and Elisabeth Chant wrote a letter to the newspaper support the concept of a museum for Wilmington, noting that it would be a "decided step up in culture." The campaign was a success, and on October 31, 1938, Wilmington's first art museum opened in a converted funeral parlor. The museum also received help from the Works Progress Administration, which had helped start art centers in Greenville, Raleigh, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem.

As its first director, Ethel Williams organized the inaugural exhibition at the new museum. It was comprised of American watercolors loaned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The show drew sixteen hundred seventy-four visitors and substantiated the need for increased exposure for the visual arts in a growing community. After serving as a center for art and culture for four years, the museum was forced to close on June 30, 1942, with the advent of World War II.

In November 1953, the **Wilmington Art Association** was formed for the encouragement of its members' work, and for the promotion of art in the Lower Cape Fear. The *Cottage Lane Art Show*, sponsored by the WAA and held during the Azalea Festival, was the catalyst for the association's statewide exhibition, with well-known jurors who also gave lectures at Wilmington College. Members of this organization also were responsible for the creation of the Artist's Gallery in 1958. Hester Donnelly and **Virginia Hamilton MacQueen** provided the moving force for the creation of the gallery at No. 3 Post Office Avenue. Although the gallery was constantly beset with financial problems, it remained an extremely popular enterprise in the eyes of Wilmingtonians. In 1962, its future was assured with a generous gift from the McKoy family. Henry McKoy at first leased the venerable St. John's Lodge building to the artists, and, two years later, deeded the property in memory of his recently deceased brother James for use as an art gallery.

The Wilmington Art Association remains a strong force in the cultural life of Wilmington today. Currently located in the *Wilmington Gallery at New Castle* at 616 Castle Street, the association holds small art shows during the year, but also sponsors the Spring Juried Art Show and Sale, which is still held during the Azalea Festival in April. The WAA holds other meetings, which contribute to the artistic life of the city, sponsors workshops and critiques for its members, and educational programs for the community. The association gives generous annual scholarships to two art majors at The University of North Carolina, Wilmington. They also maintain a website at www.wilmington-art.org, which features information about members, workshops, and other upcoming events.

The artists' gallery, in the old lodge building, became **St. John's Art Gallery, Inc.** and served Wilmington for over twenty years as its only art museum. During that time, it built a collection of works by local and regional artists, which served as the basis for the permanent collection of its successor. **St. John's Museum of Art** was the result of a major expansion of the art gallery originally located in the St. John's Lodge building. In early 1980s, the former St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church building at the corner of Second and Orange Streets, and the historic Cowan House on Second Street became available. After their purchase, the structures were renovated by the firm of **Ligon B. Flynn Architects**. Major changes provided new spaces for sales, storage, art studio classrooms, and greatly increased the potential for changing exhibitions. Under its first director, **Alan Aiches**, the museum continued its collection of regional works, and launched a number of exhibitions of regional and national importance. Aiches was also instrumental in achieving accreditation for the museum in the national American Association of Museums. The museum's second director, **Reynolds Brown** presided over the renovation of the old St. John's Lodge to provide modern office space for the museum staff, rooms for display of the museum's permanent collection, and a redesign of the areas around the museum for exhibition and permanent installation of outdoor sculpture.

At the beginning of the new millennium the expansion of the museum was proposed. Although several options that involved spaces contiguous with the existing museum were considered, a generous donation of land by the Cameron family, at the intersection of South 17th Street and Independence Blvd., resulted in the call for the design of a new museum. The result is a 42,000 square foot facility designed by the architectural firm of **Gwathmey Seigel & Associates** of New York City. The museum

opened in 2002 with a new name, the **Louise Wells Cameron Museum of Art**. The grounds include two facilities: The Cameron Museum and the **Pancoe Clay Studio**, surrounded by Pyramid Park (named for the three distinctive skylights of the museum's design). The site encompasses 9 ½ acres of longleaf pine woodlands, nature trails, a pond, a Civil War historic battleground, and site-specific sculptures.

The Museum itself includes three exhibition areas, a sculpture courtyard, lecture and reception hall, conference room, art library, museum gift shop, and a café. Under the current director, **Deborah Velders**, the museum mounts an ambitious series of changing exhibitions that include fine arts, crafts, and design. A variety of public programs, including lectures, concerts, films, literature, and dance are offered weekly. A regular series of ceramic classes at the Pancoe Clay Studio with master artist Hiroshi Sueyoshi round out the museum's offerings. The Cameron also has a strong commitment to art education for the youth of the region. **Kids @ Cam** is a program offered every third Saturday, and provides children and their families with opportunities to explore museum exhibits and participate in hands-on activities. **"Kid"cademy** is an after school art program where young students learned about current exhibitions and artists and participated in art projects based on the lessons, and **Kids @ Museum Camp** is a yearly theme based summer camp for area children. Prearranged tours for local school groups are another possibility for youth involvement. Finally, the Cameron offers specially designed tours for Alzheimer's patients known as the **Connections Program**. Clearly, the Louise Wells Cameron Art Museum has become a major asset in the visual arts community of Greater Wilmington and its surrounding counties. The Cameron maintains its website at <http://cameronartmuseum.com/index.php>.

Advocates

Among the first major advocates of the arts in Wilmington was **The Art Council of the Lower Cape Fear**, which was established in 1972 as a non-profit organization. The council's mission was "to create an environment in which cultural resources can flourish," and it was dedicated to "the living arts and to the enrichment of heritage of the Cape Fear Region." It oversaw a wide range of programming, including artist workshops, theatre productions, art and photography exhibits, and community festivals. One of its principle contributions to the area's cultural life was the *Piney Woods Arts and Crafts Festival*, established in the 1970s, and held annually in Hugh McRae Park. Although song, dance, and storytelling were important elements of the festival, hands-on arts demonstrations, as well as a juried art show were the focus of Piney Woods. Beginning in the mid-70s, the council began publishing a monthly newsletter named *Artslink* and later *Arts in Action*, which featured the various art related activities in the community. In the 1980s, the ACLCF initiated the *St. Thomas Celebration of the Arts*, which sponsored visual and performing arts events, and raised funds for the renovation of St. Thomas Church as a performing arts venue. The arts council also acted as the agent for the distribution to local artists of state *Grassroots*, *Emerging Artists* and *Regional Artists* grants. Such grants enriched the local arts community by providing funds to artists and local art organizations that were utilized by these groups to realize their special goals.

In the 1990s, the ACLCF expanded its goals again, becoming involved in the *A+ Program*, an arts in elementary schools initiative administered with state funds for "Arts

in Education.” With funds for this grant, elementary schools in the Lower Cape Fear region were able to establish the arts as a major curriculum component. In 1994, the council partnered with UNCW to create a marketing platform for the arts known as *Celebrate Wilmington*. Through this effort, support and promotion of existing cultural non-profit organizations was further realized. In its last years, the arts council worked to strengthen its Board of Directors with important community members, and to concentrate on fund raising activities with an emphasis on garnering corporate financial support.

The Arts Council closed its doors in May 2002 as a result of declining income from the *Piney Woods Festival* and the loss of financial support from both the city and county during a national economic downturn.

Seeing the gap left after the Arts Council’s demise, the Wilmington City Council appointed *The Arts and Cultural Affairs Task Force* in September 2002 to seek citizens’ input about ways to support visual arts organizations throughout the community. The result was the birth of the Arts Council’s successor, **The Greater Wilmington Arts and Cultural Alliance (GWACA)**, formed in 2004. From its inception, GWACA has made its mark in Wilmington art circles. In 2004, it worked with Cape Fear Museum to manage state sponsored *Grassroots Arts Grants*. A total of \$40,968 was awarded to 16 arts organizations and the *Regional Artists Grant* program. In 2005, it provided three training workshops for writing and managing state grants, and the next year applied for “not-for-profit” status for the support of arts and cultural activities in the greater Wilmington community.

Over the past several years, GWACA has been very involved in planning and implementing arts programs and opportunities in the Wilmington and the surrounding region. It has sponsored monthly networking events to promote communication in the arts and cultural communities; continued its partnership with Cape Fear Museum to administer *Grassroots Arts Grants*; worked in partnership with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington to survey membership and identify continuing education interests. GWACA promotes the *Business SmARTS for the Arts* training opportunities offered at UNCW’s Division for Public Service; and continues to advocate with *ARTS North Carolina* for the state funding that supports diverse local arts organizations.

The **North Carolina Arts Council** supports GWACA with funding from the state of North Carolina and the National Endowment for the Arts, organizations that share the mission to support quality arts and cultural activities in the greater Wilmington community. Additional information about the activities of **The Greater Wilmington Arts and Cultural Alliance** may be found on their website at www.gwaca.org.

One of the newest and most important advocates of art in the greater Wilmington area is **CreativeWilmington.com**, an online source for the arts which “is working for a broad public understanding of, and appreciation for, the positive impact the arts play in enriching cultural, economic, and intellectual life in our community.” Executive Director, Matthew Dols and his board provide a network of arts information and resources, which connects all sectors of community life, and is accessible to the general public. Its primary goal is to broaden public access, appreciation, participation, and education in the arts and culture of Southeastern North Carolina. **Creative Wilmington.com** is designed as a customizable, user-friendly web interface which

allows the members of the arts community in the region to have control over dispersing their own information, and have the capability to increase the visibility of the Arts by managing their own content. More about this innovative and cutting edge website may be found at <http://www.creativewilmington.com>.

Wilmington is not the only community in southeastern North Carolina with a history of arts organizations. Many of the counties surrounding New Hanover have healthy and active art councils that are supported by state grants and local contributions. The arts council movement also continues to grow throughout the state, as is clear from the sampling of counties in Southeastern North Carolina mentioned below.

Brunswick County

The Brunswick County Arts Council, established in 1981, is situated in Supply, NC, and acts as the area's primary arts information and funding source. It receives funds from the North Carolina Arts Council, which support a number of local arts groups through the state *Grassroots* Arts Grants. The arts council also sponsors the yearly *Brunswick County Arts Council Art Show*, and funds are allocated to schools for classroom programs and bus trips to regional art venues. In addition to support for the visual arts, support is dedicated to the Performing Arts and Literary Arts.

Columbus County

The **Columbus County Arts Council** maintains its own center in Whiteville, NC. Through the *Grassroots* Arts Grants, sponsored the state, the council supports local artists. Membership dues help to support their programming, which includes exhibitions of local and area artists. The CCAC website may be accessed for more information at <http://www.columbuscountyarts.com/>.

Onslow County

The **Council for the Arts** in Onslow County is located in Jacksonville, NC. The council supports the art in the area with state *Grassroots* Arts Grants, and also maintains a gallery that features monthly art exhibitions, classes, and workshops.

Pender County

The Pender County Arts Council makes it home in Burgaw, the county seat. Its history began in 1976 with the **Pender Arts and Crafts** group, which has been active with a brief hiatus since then. In 1992-3, the arts council occupied the historic train depot, where it holds art shows and administers an art gallery located in the depot. Once part of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, this railroad station dates to 1850, and is thought to be the oldest standing depot in North Carolina. Visitors may tour the depot, its gallery, and the caboose, which stands on track next to the depot. These venues are open to the public by appointment. (910) 259-8543

Art Places, Spaces

Art at UNCW

Art at **The University of North Carolina, Wilmington (UNCW)** dates to the time of the department's founding by Claude Howell in 1956. From the time the department was housed in **Kenan Hall**, there were regular displays in the building's lobby of student art, as well as exhibitions of the work of local artists. When Kenan Hall was renovated in 1994, new floor to ceiling display spaces and special glass cases and vitrines allowed the expansion of the schedule to include small traveling exhibitions, as well as shows comprised of the works of regional and national artists. The new space was officially named *The Claude Howell Gallery*, and a bust of Professor Howell by Stephen Smith, along with several of his early watercolors were permanently installed in the gallery.

In 2006, the Art and Art History department moved into a new building. The **Cultural Arts Building (CAB)** is a shared space, housing Art and Art History, Music, and Theatre. The building's art gallery is currently unnamed, providing a naming opportunity accompanied by an endowment for the enrichment of its programming. Never the less, there is already an active exhibition program which has included the work of regional and national artists, as well as the display of work by departmental scholarship winners, and the Senior Art Exhibition. The latter is a product of the senior studio art capstone course. The bust of Howell by Stephen Smith has been placed at the entrance to the new gallery.

The "Art Wall" in the **William M. Randall Library** is another major location for viewing art on the UNCW Campus. Maintained by the library staff, this space has hosted many shows of UNCW faculty work, exhibitions of local and regional artists, and regular exhibitions of work by the recipients of the *North Carolina Living Treasure Award*.

For a number of years Sherman Hayes, Head Librarian of **Randall Library**, has devoted a percentage of his yearly budget to the purchase of works by local and regional artists. All of the art works purchased or donated to the library are displayed on its walls, and form the visual counterpart of the intellectual enrichment provided by the written word. The inauguration of *The Visual Arts Community in Wilmington and South East North Carolina* website is clearly an expansion of that mission.

UNCW Presents, an arm of the UNCW Student Affairs Division, administers the **Ann Flack Boseman Gallery** in the newly renovated University Union. This space was made possible by a generous donation to the university by its namesake. Ann Boseman has been active in the Wilmington visual arts community for many years, and has also taken numerous classes at the university for her own enjoyment. Grateful for the enrichment she has experienced in courses at UNCW, Ms. Boseman gave back to the university with her gracious gift. Additional exhibition spaces associated with the Boseman Gallery are found in Warwick Center and the Fisher Student Center. In its mission statement, the Boseman Gallery declares that its primary function is as a student focused space, but that faculty, alumni, and guest artists are often featured in its

exhibitions. More about the Ann Flack Boseman Gallery may be found on its website at www.uncw.edu/stuaff/presents/boseman-gallery.htm.

Art Spaces in Wilmington

In the community there are a number of art spaces that considerably enhance the life of the arts in Wilmington. Because their numbers have increased significantly over the last few years, it is impossible to include them all. Some are primarily devoted to the making of art. One such place is the recently renovated **Community Arts Center**, formerly the Wilmington U.S.O. It is now a part of Wilmington's Parks and Recreation Department and is located in the city's historic downtown. The **Thalian Association**, a community theatre organization, manages the building for the city and has offices and rehearsal space there. Although the facility supports a number of activities in the performance arts, it also offers a variety of classes in the visual arts. The Center is dedicated primarily to learning, and offers low-cost lessons in a full range of disciplines from experienced local artists. Workshops, classes, performances, concerts, and fund-raisers form the bulk of the Center's offerings.

Acme Art Studios is another "art making" space which has a special place in the Wilmington art community. Founded as a consortium by seven artists in 1992, Acme Art provides

individual rented studio spaces for up to twenty-two artists. The warehouse-like interior is divided with partitions into individual studios for artists working in various media, including, painting, sculpture, and photography. Artists are free to alter their spaces in any way that makes them suitable to the creative demands of their medium, as long as they do not interfere with their neighbors. Acme offers two major art shows, one in December and the other, a spring show in April. It also hosts the biennial international **No Boundaries Art Colony** exhibition, various workshops, and occasional residencies for foreign artists.

Founded by Dan Brawley and Dixon Stetler, the **Independent Art Company** is a contemporary arts venue housed in two buildings located at Ninth and Princess Streets. *Jengo's Playhouse* is a sixty seat micro-cinema, and the *Wabi-Sabi Warehouse* has 10 studios for visual artists and an intimate studio gallery. The gallery is billed as a "do-it-yourself exhibition space for contemporary artists," has revolving exhibitions throughout the year, and participates in **Fourth Friday Gallery Nights**. For more information about performances and exhibitions visit the IAC website at http://creativewilmington.com/member_detail.php?id=226.

Another place, which has been a personal space for creativity, is the **Golden Gallery**, a venerable art institution in Wilmington. For the past thirty years it has occupied an important niche in The Cotton Exchange in downtown Wilmington. Although it has moved five times within the Exchange, the gallery has always been one of the most popular venues in this complex of shops and boutiques which are housed in the city's old cotton market. Its proprietor, **Mary Ellen Golden**, a native of Rose Hill, North Carolina, began working in oils and acrylics before she settled on watercolor as her favorite medium. She finds that "the beauty in the natural world around us is [her]

favorite subject.” Ms. Golden takes her inspiration from associations and memories she has experienced in nature, and through insight and feeling transforms them into watercolors.

When she moved to Wilmington in 1977, she opened a studio gallery in The Cotton Exchange and began teaching watercolor technique. Golden may often be found painting in the gallery, and her instructional video, *Watercolor Can Be Easy*,” is often running on a video monitor in the store. Her credits include membership in the Wilmington Art Association, the Watercolor Society of North Carolina, and the American Watercolor Society; and her work is represented in many corporate and private collections. Golden’s watercolor originals and *Giclée* prints are featured in the gallery. Originally all the work in the Golden Gallery was hers alone, but she now shares the space with two other artists.

Her son, **John W. Golden** is a graphic artist whose digital images range from colorful fish to detailed depictions of dogs. Mr. Golden also works in the medium of photography, and his recent *Rovinato* series combines landscapes and cityscapes with rich overlays of photographed textures from rusted metal forms to peeling paint, which give the subjects the feel of ancient ruins and worlds lost in time.

Melissa Manley is a conceptual artist who works in a variety of media. Her metalwork and jewelry are featured in the gallery. Ms. Manley received her B.A. in art from UNCW, and her M.F.A. from ECU. Her work incorporates small delicate forms such as seashells, dried seaweed, and tumbled beach glass combined with beads, semiprecious gems, and copper and silver wire. She also creates stamped and pierced silver jewelry inspired by sea foam, waves, and seaweed. Manley’s other work includes hammered copper vessels in the tradition of colonial craftsmen, and objects assembled from rusted steel wire and animal gut which create the feel of ribbons of drapery, or even seaweed, swirling in ocean currents. More about the work of Melissa Manley may be found on her website <http://www.melissamanleystudios.com/>. The Golden Gallery website is <http://www.thegoldengallery.com/>.

The **Racine Center for the Arts** is housed in a building of contemporary design that features 23,000 square feet of space for studio artists and designers, the *Firebird Art and Pottery Studio*, art education and music education classes, gift shops, a café, and a retail art gallery. Art classes in clay and other media are offered for students of all ages. The center has a particularly active program for youth. The *Gallery at Racine* is an established fine art gallery that represents talented local and national artists. A majority of the work offered for sale is original. In the years since its opening, the gallery has become a mecca for artists and appreciators of art on Racine Drive, located between Wilmington’s downtown district and Wrightsville Beach. The center maintains its own website at: <http://www.racinecenter.com>.

Among spaces dedicated exclusively to the exhibition and sale of art, **New Elements Gallery** has been a Wilmington fixture for almost as long as the Golden Gallery. As a premier location for the exhibition and sale of art, it opened in 1985. Three years later in 1988, its current owner, Merrimon Kennedy, purchased it. The gallery emphasizes regional art, and particularly promotes North Carolina artists. A number of works in the crafts, however, come from across the nation. New shows are mounted each

month and correspond with **Fourth Friday Gallery Nights**, which Ms. Kennedy initiated in 2003. The gallery also represents a number of local artists who are listed on its website, which also contains information on exhibiting artists, upcoming shows, and illustrates works from current shows: <http://www.newelementsgallery.com>.

Bottega Art and Wine is an artist-owned gallery in downtown Wilmington that opened in March 2006. Its owners, artist, Bonnie England and author, Steve Gibbs have put their special talents together to create a new niche for art in the area. Ms. England is a 2005 graduate of UNCW with a double major in art and art history. Her original plan was to open a private studio in a storefront so that it also had a public face. She can often be found painting in the bar or the front window of the establishment. After surveying the market she and her partner Steve, who previously worked as a wine and beer wholesaler, saw the potential for an art and wine bar. While other galleries often combine sales and framing, they found a way to bring art into relaxed social setting, where patrons might enjoy art, and reflect on their purchase over shared hors d'oeuvres and a glass of wine. The word *bottega* means “shop” or “workshop,” and has a double meaning for this gallery. It can be used to identify a storefront art studio for the production of works of art, as well as a shop where wine and spirits are sold. The gallery sponsors shows by local artists and many special events such as poetry and literature readings, live music, children’s events, and multi-media happenings. For more see <http://www.bottegageallery.com/>.

Creations by Justine is a one-artist gallery in Wilmington that exhibits the whimsical and quirky works of its owner, Justine Ferreri. Justine and her husband, Guy, are well known in Wilmington as former restaurateurs who operated *Justine’s*. It was in that venue that Ferreri began her love affair with art by creating life-sized *papier-maché* images of their customers. The artist’s current works in earthenware are inspired by her experiences of the performing arts. Delightful pieces based on the ballet, modern dance, and the musical theatre greet visitors as they enter the gallery. Ferreri also creates works which incorporate the antics of court jesters and circus performers. The gallery includes a space for display of her work and that of other artists she has chosen to exhibit, and a personal studio where she makes her own creations. More about Ferreri’s work may be found on her gallery website at: <http://www.creationsbyjustine.com/>.

WHQRfm, Wilmington’s NPR station, dedicated to cultural programming and classical music, also supports an art gallery in the atrium of its offices on Front Street in downtown Wilmington. The use of this space for art became a priority when the station moved its headquarters from Greenfield Street to center city. It has held numerous shows featuring works by state and local artists. The gallery has recently undergone renovation and been renamed **The Montage Gallery at WHQR**. In its new incarnation, it is managed by the owners of **Montage Art and Design and Accent on Framing**, which has its principle gallery at Cross Creek Commons in Leland, NC. The owners, artist, Jonnié Chardonn, and framer, Mary Anne Sauer feature the art of local, regional, and international artists in their Leland gallery and organize regular exhibitions for the new space. WHQRfm has a website at: <http://www.whqr.org/>, and more about Montage

Art and Design may be found at:

http://creativewilmington.com/member_detail.php?id=776.

Walls Gallery of Art, located on Wrightsville Avenue in Wilmington, has been promoting the visual arts in this community since 1984. The gallery is owned by David Leadman and Nancy Marshall, who themselves are painters. Their history includes development of corporate and private art collections, conservation of art works, and framing. Their vision for the gallery is based on the premise that Wilmington deserves the best, and this determines their selection of work display and sale. The focus is on representational art and emphasizes work that is rooted in Nature and features traditional drawing skills. Walls Gallery of Art also includes a gilding studio and conservation framing facility. The gallery website is found at: <http://www.wallsgallery.com/>

Artist Holly Perno-Smith started **Three Hounds Gallery** in 2006 as a place where local and area artists can show and sell their work. The gallery reviews artists' work in various media on a monthly basis, and holds single and group exhibitions regularly. The gallery website is <http://www.threehoundsgallery.com/>.

Port City Pottery and Fine Crafts is located in the historic Cotton Exchange in downtown Wilmington. It is the only gallery in Wilmington dedicated exclusively to handmade, one-of-a-kind, 3-dimensional art and craft. Founded through the collaborative efforts of seven professional women potters, the gallery features decorative and functional works in Clay, Fiber Wall Hangings, Painted Floor Cloths, Wearable Fiber Art, Jewelry, Mixed Media Sculpture, Pine Needle Baskets, and Custom Wood Furniture. Works in the gallery are selected by jury from among art created by coastal North Carolina artisans. More information about individual artists made be found on the gallery's website at: <http://www.portcitypottery.com/>.

Art Spaces in Surrounding Counties

Beyond the confines of Greater Wilmington, art galleries and spaces continue to proliferate. Such spaces in various communities are many, and may be found by accessing the tourism sites for each county. As a result, only a few are featured in the following section.

Southport has its own artists group, **Associated Artists of Southport**, based in the historic **Franklin Square Gallery** at 134 E. West Street. Although the association's first priority is the growth and development of its members, it also promotes art education in the community. The group celebrated their twenty-five year anniversary in 2004, an occasion which also marked the 100th anniversary of the Franklin Square Gallery building. The newly renovated Gallery houses two floors of exhibition rooms, a sales office, and a meeting room. In addition to monthly meetings for its members, Associated Artists sponsors, classes in painting, drawing, and pottery, as well as workshops in a variety of media, and juried exhibitions, all of which are open to the public.

Every July, a juried exhibition is held in conjunction with the N.C. Fourth of July Festival. Painting and pottery classes are held yearly for school children, and culminate in

Kids Day, a community fun day, free to the public, sponsored by the Associated Artists, Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department and Southport Parks and Recreation Department. Associated Artists of Southport maintains a website at: www.franklinsquaregallery.org.

In Onslow County, the **World Art Gallery**, in business since 1972, is a family owned and operated art gallery and custom picture frame shop. They show and sell original oil paintings, decorator prints, and hold the exclusive franchise to sell the works of such artists as Bob Timberlake.

Tidewater Gallery in historic downtown Swansboro, NC is a studio gallery located in an old icehouse on the White Oak River. The gallery features representational fine art and crafts, and an onsite woodcarving studio where a master carver produces decoys and sculptures of waterfowl. The Icehouse restaurant, with views of the river, adjoins the gallery.

The Pender County Museum, in Burgaw is the area's history museum. As part of its mission, it also displays such items as furniture, quilts, photographs, and paintings, which add to the visual history of art in the region. The museum is operated by the local historical society. More information about the museum's hours and collections may be found on the *Museums USA* site at: <http://www.museumsusa.org/museums/info/1163031>.

The Oak Island Art Guild meets at the Oak Island Recreation Center, where members and guest artists lead free monthly workshops, which are open to the public. Workshops cover various media such as watercolor, oil, acrylic, pastel, pen-and-ink, colored pencil, clay, collage, tile painting, calligraphy, portraits, and abstracts. Each year the Guild sponsors a high school senior, who plans to attend college and major in art, with a \$1,000 two-semester scholarship. Major events supported by the Guild include the Labor Day Arts and Crafts Fair, the Celebration of Oak Island, and the annual juried show, Arts by The latter two are co-sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department. □(910) 278-3553.

Art Colonies

No Boundaries, Inc. is the premier art colony in southeastern North Carolina. Its impetus came from visits made by three Wilmington arts in successive years from 1994 to 1996 at an art colony in Macedonia. As the result of contacts made in 1993 at Acme Art's "Hunter Moon Festival," painter, Pam Toll was encouraged to apply for a summer residence at an art colony in Sloestica, Macedonia. In 1994, Toll went alone, but the next year she was accompanied by Wilmington ceramic sculptor, Gayle Tustin. The following year, Wilmington artist, Dick Roberts did a residency at the colony. The friendships and contacts made in those three years resulted in the creation of an international art colony here in Wilmington with residencies for artists from abroad. After looking at many locations, the colony found a home on Bald Head Island. Toll, Tustin and Roberts worked tirelessly to perpetuate No Boundaries, Inc. and have succeeded in establishing a biennial international colony on Bald Head, alternating with one that serves artists from the southeastern region of the United States. No Boundaries, Inc. now functions as a not-

for-profit 501 corporation with a board of directors. International colonies always invite one artist from Macedonia. One colony was based on the theme of Wilmington's Sister Cities, and artists from Dandong, China, Barbados, Doncaster, England, and Fumicello, Italy attended. At the end of each colony, **Acme Art Studios** sponsors an exhibition of works by the resident artists and a reception for the public. Artist residents at No Boundaries have also shared their talents with students at DREAMS (a Wilmington organization that brings art to at risk children), students at UNCW, and audiences at the Cameron Art Museum, Acme Art Studios, the Wilmington Art Association, and the Rotary Club.

Their next project is to work with **Paint-a-Future**, thanks to Pam Toll, who participated in two symposiums in Brazil and France as part of this amazing initiative. The project was initiated by Dutch artist Hetty van der Linden, who sees the potential for art to help children all over the world. She visits who are the victims of poverty, war, or violence, and paints with them. Then, she incorporates their paintings into large canvases of her own, and translates them into editions of serigraphs expressing hopes and wishes of the children. Both the canvases and serigraphs are for sale. All the income from sales is used to realize each child's dream in the form of housing, food, medicine, schools, and playground equipment. At the next No Boundaries colony, resident artists will create paintings from the compositions and faces of these children, which will be used by van der Linden to continue her work with Paint-a-Future.

Art Fairs, Festivals, Happenings

Undoubtedly the most important art happenings in Wilmington are **Fourth Friday Gallery Nights**. This event has a long history, dating back to the nineties when it was initiated by several downtown Wilmington galleries, including New Elements, and was coordinated with exhibition openings at St. John's Museum of Art. Responsibility for coordinating these events has recently been shouldered by Bottega Art and Wine. Currently, nine galleries participate in the area from Water Street to Fifth and Campbell to Nun in the downtown historic district and historic overlay. They run monthly from April to December, but their popularity suggests the possibility of having them year-round in 2009 and beyond.

The **Orange Street Art Fair** is a small but delightful festival that occupies one block on Orange Street between Second and Front, and has recently expanded onto Second. It is sponsored by the Thalian Association, which uses the Community Arts Center for its headquarters. Orange Street Art Fair also receives support from other community organizations. The fair is one of the oldest in Wilmington, with thirteen consecutive years in existence. Usually scheduled in May, it has art, entertainment, and food for attendees, and is free, with donations appreciated to support the work of the Thalian Association. It's intimate scope and the excellence of its offerings makes it an appealing choice for art lovers.

Celebration on Castle Street was the brainchild of Michael Moore and the artists of the Wilmington Art Association. Moore was the first to move his antique store to Castle Street, and has been promoting the area ever since. Celebration on Castle Street is

a spring arts and crafts street fair that encompasses a several block section of the street and includes booths for local and regional artists and craftsmen, as well as food and entertainment. Made possible through the volunteer efforts of the artists at the Wilmington Gallery, and the various antique venues that have taken root there, the Celebration is in its second year, and looks to become a staple among Wilmington's art fairs and festivals.

The arts and crafts fair which has long been a part of Wilmington's *Azalea Festival*, is also worthy of mention. Covering the waterfront from Chandlers Warf to the Railroad Museum on Water Street, and recently overflowing onto Front, it is probably the largest yearly arts event in Wilmington. Drawing artists and craftsmen from all over the state, and some from other states, its size encompasses work which ranges from the fine arts to the simplest country crafts. Its continued success is a testament to the health of the arts not only in Wilmington, but the whole state.

What does the future hold for the Visual Arts in Wilmington and South East North Carolina?

The many arts organizations, artists groups, and the legions of practicing artists in southeastern North Carolina are undeniable proof that the history of the visual arts is rich and varied in the region. It testifies to the importance of the visual arts in the daily lives of those who live, work, and dream in our communities. The scope and variety of artistic endeavors to date is amazing in metropolitan Wilmington, New Hanover County, and surrounding small towns and rural areas. The region continues to grow and to attract new "settlers" who bring their talents as visual artists, or their love of art with them. As South East North Carolina continues to be enriched by those who love and make art, the future looks bright.

The artist Jean Arp said, "Art is a fruit that grows in man, like a fruit on a plant, or a child in its mother's womb." In Wilmington and its surrounding counties, the Visual Arts are alive and well. Here they have flowered and produced fruit. In this place, their roots run deep.