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Art displayed by previous Artist in Residency recipients cover a variety of artistic mediums and skills.

A Partnership between



By Annie Bennett, Co-Editor

In 2009, Jan Webb, then executive director of North Dakota Council on the Arts (NDCA), introduced the idea to Doug Prchal, then director at the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD), to create an artist in residency program. Shortly after, NDPRD partnered with NDCA and the annual program blossomed. “It was a perfect way to feature the diverse, unique and extraordinary places that exist in North Dakota and provide time and space to creative individuals,” says Rhea Beto, public information officer at NDCA.

The Artist in Residency Program

Each year, three parks participate in the program based on capacity and logistics. “The residencies are seven to 10 days and can happen during any season,” says Beto. “Artists have been inspired to do their work in the middle of the night with well-below-zero temps, while others choose to create in the morning to escape 100-degree heat in the afternoon.”



The Artist in Residency program recruits a wide variety of artists, including performing, literary and visual artists. “An important aspect of the review process is how the artist describes their public interactions through a workshop or lecture,” says Kim Konikow current NDCA executive director. “Applicants must be North Dakota residents and are selected by examining

artist statements, samples/pictures of artwork, goals related to public presentations, and ability to connect their art to the hosting North Dakota state park,” explains Josh Steffan, Ph.D., North Dakota Parks education and programs division chief.

Preference is given to those who have not previously participated in the program, he notes.

The application states the artist must donate a piece of art representing their artistic style and residency to the state park and grant NDPRD the right to reproduce the work. “If a literary work is produced, NDPRD requires a one-time publication right to the portion of the work produced during the residency,” notes Konikow.

Each artist in residency must provide a minimum of two onsite presentations. One presentation must be a hands-on workshop, open to all ages, exploring artistic skills, methods and/or tools. The second presentation may be a lecture, exhibition or creative walk.

NDCA doesn’t select the donated art, it is completely up to the resident artist. “Paintings range from landscape, nature and wildlife scenes to iconic images of historic buildings in the parks,” notes Steffan. “Ceramic pieces are always stunning as well as wood carvings, painted linens and pine needle baskets. In addition to photography, literary works and audio compositions, they are all unique and all North Dakota.”

Park Displays

North Dakota has 13 state parks throughout the state. “Since 2009, 10 parks have hosted an artist in residence, and each artist has donated a piece of art to the park,” says Steffan.

“Many of the parks have artwork displayed that may be



The Artist in Residency program features artists in three North Dakota state parks each year.

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from other programs,” adds Konikow.

The Artist in Residency program fits into the missions of both NDCA and NDRPD. “When we can collaborate with other North Dakota agencies to fulfill this mission, it’s a win-win for everyone,” says Beto.

NDCA’s mission is “to strengthen the creative capacity of North Dakota for all who live and visit here, honoring our cultural traditions, empowering excellence and innovation, inspiring arts and culture opportunities for all.”

“NDRPD’s mission is to enrich generations through experiences that connect people and places,” says Steffan.

“Artmaking is often a solo endeavor,” says Konikow. “Through this long-standing collaboration with parks and recreation, these residencies offer supported time away from the home environment, but also offer nature – glorious, outdoor spaces to spark the creative imagination. Artists also have several opportunities to interact with a public that may not have experiential understanding of the arts.”

The Artists

Artist Pieper Bloomquist, selected for the Artist in Residency program in 2021, says the program shows the importance of both art and artists. “To have time away from your



Pieper Bloomquist was selected for the Artist in Residency program in 2021.

life to just focus on your creating - the most meaningful [part of the Artist in Residency program] – that says to me that art is valued,” says Bloomquist. “The creative time of an

artist’s life is valued and valued in a way someone is going to put money forward and help financially support that. We value it enough to help fund this opportunity for you, being able to just take a break and create something for the park and yourself is revitalizing.”

Additional Exhibit

From January through April, many pieces donated during the program are on display in the Exhibition Gallery on the 18th floor of the North Dakota State Capitol. The exhibition is the first time these pieces have been brought together in one location.



“The works included in the Capitol exhibition are a perfect amalgamation of the wondrous four seasons of North Dakota,” notes Beto. “This exhibition will travel to Watford City, Williston and Minot throughout the summer.

“Supporting and hosting these artists creates unique experiences for both the artist to be inspired by the beauty of a North Dakota state park and to inspire the next generation of artists and others through their public, hands-on learning activity/presentation,” says Steffan. “All of this helps support the physical, mental and emotional well-being of participants.”

The 2023 Artist in Residency application is available at www.parkrec.nd.gov/art-parks, along with additional information on the program.