

BAINBRIDGE ARTS & CRAFTS

# Bringing artists together to thrive



Photo by Joel Sackett

Executive Director, Lindsay Masters, listening to artist Brian Watson talk about his work during installation for his exhibit.

*Contrary to myth, most artists don't thrive in isolation. They thrive in context.*

In 1948 on a sparsely populated island with no bridge, a small group of local artists and craftspeople turned toward each other for inspiration and cohesion. They wanted to see and share new art, learn about art, and bolster their livelihoods through art.

Sixty-eight years later, both Bainbridge Arts & Crafts and the vision of its founders endure.

Call it a visual arts trifecta: BAC nurtures artists at all stages of their development and careers, provides art education to people of all ages and abilities, and puts art to work in the human services arena.

"Bainbridge Arts & Crafts encapsulates what is wonderful about this island," Executive Director Lindsay Masters says. "BAC's founders built an organization around a sophisticated, broad-minded, and generous vision that art can accomplish multitudes: it can become a livelihood, a platform for education, and a means for improving people's quality of life."

The BAC storefront at 151 Winslow Way is now the hub for a rich, complementary mix of artwork for sale, art education, and visual arts programming with a focus on human services.

The front gallery showcases ceramics, glass, jewelry, paintings, metalwork, drawings, sculpture, wood, textiles, and functional artwork with a contemporary bent, all handmade by Northwest artists, including a strong showing of immensely talented artists who are Bainbridge-based.

SEE ARTISTS, 11

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## ARTISTS

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The middle and rear galleries are devoted to monthly rotating special exhibitions that, much like they did when BAC was founded, shine a spotlight on artists of all ages and life stages.

Recent solo and group show highlights include regional stars like Gerard Tsutakawa, Duane Pasco, and Keiko Hara along with hometown gems Caroline Cooley Browne, Sally Robison (for whom the middle gallery is named) and Claudia McKinstry.

## ARTS EDUCATION IN ITS MISSION

Exhibiting student art and supporting the development of young artists remains a major focus as well. BAC maintains a longstanding relationship with the Bainbridge Island School District and each May, donates gallery space to local schools to give K-12 students and their hardworking teachers a chance to shine in a public gallery setting.

BAC also administers annual

scholarships to graduating high school seniors who plan to study art in college, and provides grants to island art teachers to supplement their supply and programming budgets.

Community education programs include monthly talks and demonstrations by professional artists,

### BAINBRIDGE ARTS & CRAFTS

Lindsay Masters, executive director  
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which are offered free to the public on the first Saturday of each month.

Affordable art workshops occur year-round with a focus on personalized instruction and small teacher-student ratios. Noteworthy community events include The Annual Artists' Almost Perfect Sale, a benefit auction, and Paint Out Winslow, a weekend-long plein air festival.

In recent years, under the leadership of former Executive Director Susan Jackson, BAC developed and established programming that focuses

on human service through art.

- Art After 60 sends teaching artists into three local retirement centers every month to lead art activities with residents. By creating social opportunities and encouraging shared histories and storytelling, Art After 60 supports seniors' health and well-being.
- Art in the Lobby sends artists into the waiting area of Harrison Hospital Bremerton once per week each summer to lead therapeutic art activities with patients and families.
- The Art Rental program enlivens area hospitals and medical centers with top-notch local art, creating a visual respite within what is by nature a stressful environment.

As a nonprofit, adaptability and "can-do" have always been functional hallmarks of Bainbridge Arts & Crafts.

In addition to selling art, the organization has devised creative ways to raise money to support its education and service endeavors. BAC offers annual memberships that come with a discount on gallery purchases.

"Being a sales venue is just the beginning of how we function in our community," Masters says. "The

dollars we take in through sales help create a livelihood for the 260 artists we represent, which is critically important because a healthy arts sector supports a healthy community.

"At the same time, we put our membership, grant, and fundraising dollars to work in arts education and in our service programs. We are doing what every robust nonprofit organization does – we put our income back out to work in the community. And we do it in ways that underscore the power of art to change lives."

BAC is also a fun place to be, where staff and volunteers impart a sense of joy and purpose as they invite visitors to make new discoveries.

Masters, who has been on staff since 2013, first walked into BAC a few days after moving to the island in 2004 and was immediately struck by the gallery's friendliness and accessibility.

"At BAC, art isn't something to be held over your head or kept at a distance – it is something to be shared," she says. "Everyone who walks through our door, whether it's new visitors, longtime patrons, or artists, feels that sense of warmth and friendship. People are at home here."



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