



**56** Fine Arts

**58** At Home with Art

**60** Arts Like a Bermudian

# Arts *at the Heart*

Bermuda's art scene is staggeringly rich and diverse. The island's artists are surely inspired by the beauty and bright colours of Bermuda's landscape; perhaps the melding of cultural influences also encourages creativity.

By Andrea Milam

Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art, Architecture, Red House, Charles Demuth



# FINE ARTS

*Bermuda has inspired countless musicians, artists, writers and more.*

England was the first to permanently colonise Bermuda in the early 1600s, and the island remains a British Overseas Territory today. The country's influences can be found in many facets of Bermudian culture, perhaps most notably in the island's historic architecture. In turn, Bermuda has inspired notable British artists, including renowned playwright William Shakespeare. It's believed that his early 17th-century play, *The Tempest*, was inspired by the sinking of the sailing vessel *Sea Venture*, which wrecked in Bermuda in 1609.

Several centuries after *The Tempest*, John Lennon of The Beatles arrived on Bermuda's shores for the first time in 1980. He was experiencing a significant creative

drought at the time — it had been almost five years since he'd completed a song — and, as it turned out, Bermuda would deliver just the inspirational boost Lennon needed. During a stroll through the Bermuda Botanical Gardens, Lennon glimpsed a double fantasy freesia flower, which lent its name to his final album — *Double Fantasy*.

"I was there on the beach taping songs, just playing guitar and singing," Lennon said of his time in Bermuda. "We were just in the sun and these songs were coming out."

Bermuda's close proximity to the U.S. extended its influence to American artists, too, including American writer Mark Twain. Though there are no mentions of Bermuda to be found in his more famous works, Twain

## Seek Out Art

**Bermuda has been calling to artists for hundreds of years. Countless writers, painters and musicians have all put pen to paper and brush to canvas to capture our island's sights and sounds.**

**At the City Hall & Arts Centre, you will find the Bermuda Society of Arts (BSOA).**

**Also known as "the people's gallery," this warm space is where local artists showcase their work. BSOA's monthly Friday night show openings are the perfect start to the weekend as you mix and mingle with other art enthusiasts — and perhaps take home some artwork as a memento.**

**Not all art is in the galleries. The Corporation of Hamilton has commissioned public artwork, so as you explore the city, be on the lookout for murals, artistic poetry and mosaics.**

**The Hamilton Princess & Beach Club has undergone a massive renovation, including the addition of a world-class collection of contemporary art, with works by Banksy, Liu Ye, Andy Warhol and Nelson Mandela. Guided tours are offered weekly.**

spent much of his later years on the island, where he penned articles for American periodicals in which he extolled the virtues of the place he considered paradise.

"You can go on to Heaven if you want. I'd rather stay in Bermuda," he is said to have remarked near the end of his life.

So many artists have been inspired by Bermuda, in fact, that the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art features a permanent collection of more than 1,500 pieces that depict the island's beauty. The Bermudiana Collection includes island scenes by renowned international artists like Georgia O'Keeffe and Winslow Homer, as well as local artists.

colourful garb, hats and masks, and decorate themselves with mirrors, bells and tassels.

Though the island is geographically isolated, it shares some of its cultural influences with the Caribbean, including music. Some of the most popular forms of music in Bermuda — like calypso, soca, steelpan and reggae — originated in the Caribbean, and one of Bermuda's own performers, Collie Buddz, has become an international reggae success.

Individual artists in Bermuda run the gamut from painters, pottery artists and wood sculptors to fine art photographers, chalk artists and spoken word performers. There are numerous places on island where visitors can experience Bermudian art.

The Bermuda National Gallery in Hamilton is a feast for the eyes from the moment you enter its City Hall location; a splendid cedar staircase leads you to the gallery, whose

Ondaatje Wing features works that tell the island's history and showcase its multifaceted cultural influences. Also in City Hall and up the grand staircase is the Bermuda Society of Arts, whose four separate gallery spaces host rotating works from local artists. History and art come together in St. George's at the World Heritage Centre, where paintings depicting the life of Bermuda's first settlers are on display. And at Royal Naval Dockyard's Bermuda Craft Market, you can see the island's artists and craftsmen at work and interact with the artisans as they make their Bermuda cedar creations, jewellery, candles and much more.

## UNIQUE CREATIVITY CAN BE FOUND ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF MEDIUMS IN BERMUDA.

Unique creativity can be found across a wide range of mediums in Bermuda, from the Plein Air Painters, a group of artists whose practice of painting whilst out in nature is made even more pleasant by the island's subtropical climate, to the Gombey dancers, whose dress, dance and style of drumming originated in the 1600s. This folk life tradition has its roots in slavery, when slaves would protest the rule that they could only dance once a year by feting in masks to avoid punishment. Today, this revered form of expression is performed at holidays and events by Gombey troupes, whose members dress in



The Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art, located in the Botanical Gardens, comprises an impressive collection of over 1,400 pieces of Bermuda inspired art, the Arrowroot Gift Shop and Homer's Café.

On display you will find such famous names as Georgia O'Keeffe, Winslow Homer and Albert Gleizes.

To learn more about Bermuda's culture and history there is no better stop on your vacation itinerary.

**Museum Hours**  
Monday to Saturday  
10:00am to 4:00pm  
Closed on Sundays and public holidays

**Admission**  
General admission \$5  
FREE for members & children under 12  
Wheelchair accessible

Located in The Botanical Gardens,  
183 South Road, Paget DV04, Bermuda  
(441) 299-4000 • mworks@logibc.bm

www.bermudamasterworks.org



masterworks  
Museum of Bermuda Art



Bermuda National Gallery, *Iconostasis of Water* (detail photo), Nancy Graves



Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art, *Shiribone Alley*, St. George's, Ogden Minton Pleissner



## AT HOME WITH ART

*Jo Birdsey Linberg keeps the welcoming, homey feel at The Birdsey Studio alive.*



Following in her father's footsteps, Jo Birdsey Linberg has kept the welcoming, homey feel at The Birdsey Studio alive, which got its start in the early 1950s, when Alfred Birdsey would hang his watercolour paintings on a clothes line outside his Paget studio.

"We lived on the only road out of Hamilton to Somerset, so anybody who was going that way would have to pass us by," says Linberg. "People would come up on pedal bikes and carriages and open taxis. It was an ideal opportunity for him to meet people visiting here."

Though Linberg never intended to be a painter, she was drawn towards art as a child, when she and her sister would paint with their father for fun. "I'd paint the island, my sister would paint the sky and my dad would paint the house," she recalls of their early collaborative efforts.

A chance encounter led to Jo's first commission, when a representative of the children's hospital arrived at the gallery asking for Alfred, who happened to be away for a three-month stint, to create some paintings for the children.

"I said, 'I can paint animals,' so I did it and she bought 15 big ones," she recalls. "I had no idea what to charge her or how to sign the paintings, but she encouraged me to keep going, because you couldn't get original artwork for children. By the time dad came back from Australia, I had a thing going."

Today, more than two decades after her father's passing, Linberg can't deny the strong inclination towards art that's in her blood.

"It's like when you pet a cat: you pat its head, then go over the back towards the tail," she says. "That's what my painting is about — my feeling, a sensation of movement."

The Birdsey Studio is the oldest working studio in Bermuda. In 1968, it was moved a few doors away to a garden setting at the back of the family home. Today you can also find Linberg's landscapes and seascapes in watercolour and oil.

Linberg runs The Birdsey Studio in the same welcoming, laid-back way as her father, who died in 1996. Paintings lay loose, matted and frameless throughout the gallery, and it's not uncommon to find Jo barefoot amongst her creations, accompanied by a dachshund or two.



Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art, Portrait de Juliette Roche, Albert Cléaïses

### BERMUDA ART WALK

There are many talented artists in the world who simply don't have the connections it takes for their work to be shown in a gallery. This is the idea that gave rise to Art Walk, an annual self-guided tour event that takes place in the historic Town of St. George.

A wide variety of creative mediums are on display at the Art Walk, including the more common pottery, sculpture, cedar carvings, dancing and paintings, along with more unique forms of art like spoken word, instrumentals, weaving, and tattoo. At the free event, you can interact directly with local artists while enjoying the charmingly historic setting of St. George's.



**Tip: The island's rich art scene isn't only viewable in museums. Many cafés are decorated with locally made works of art.**

Pick up a map and follow the suggested route, which starts at the Heritage Museum and continues along Water Street. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of St. George's makes a lovely backdrop for this vibrant, interactive arts event; its neat little brick streets and four centuries of British colonial architecture are a work of art in their own right.

Though the event was typically held in October, it was moved to June in 2017 to tie in with the America's Cup event schedule. In honour of the race, five artists painted five Opti sails, and the boats were sailed around the St. George's harbour by youth from the America's Cup Endeavour Program.

Bermuda Plein Air Painters were at work throughout the town, whilst the Chewstick Foundation welcomed event-goers to leave their mark in a collaborative mural. Chalk artist Rebecca Martin encouraged little ones to embrace their artistic side with a chalk art workshop, and the Sui Generis Dance Team performed a dynamic routine.

With its diverse collection of mediums and an environment that encourages interaction with the artists, the Bermuda Art Walk is an ideal event for enjoying the beauty and creativity of talented Bermudians.

*Jo Birdsey  
Linberg*

*The Birdsey Studio*

5 STOWE HILL, PAGET  
PG 05 BERMUDA

Tel: 441-236-6658/5845  
E-mail: linberg@northrock.bm

Hours 10:30am–1pm Monday–Friday  
Appointments recommended







Meredith Andrews



There's so much to explore in Bermuda. Want to experience it all as the locals do? Here are our picks for the best places to see and purchase art.

**THE BERMUDA CRAFT MARKET**

**The Cooperage Building  
Royal Naval Dockyard, Sandys  
Tel: 234-3208**

**Website: bermudacraftmarket.com**

The Bermuda Craft Market in Dockyard has the largest collection of Bermuda-made crafts and products on the island. As you wander around the historic building, you will see craftsmen at work. Please stop and chat with them. All items are available for purchase and include Bermuda banana dolls; Bermuda pink sand; sterling and 14-karat gold-filled jewellery; pottery; candles; handmade soaps; sea glass pendants; cedar bowls; jams and jellies; and lots more.

**THE BIRDSEY STUDIO**

**5 Stowe Hill, Paget  
Tel: 236-6658**

**E-mail: linberg@northrock.bm**

Jo Birdsey Linberg, daughter of Bermuda's first modern artist, Alfred Birdsey, painted for many years with her father at The Birdsey Studio before his death in 1996. Today, she continues the family tradition. Created predominately in watercolour, her impressionistic landscapes, figurative paintings and whimsical animals reflect her mentor's artistic legacy through simple lines and Oriental-inspired brushwork; but they also establish Jo's own artistic

niche and creative stamp. Her watercolours have been exhibited in Bermuda and overseas, whilst collected and commissioned internationally. Jo's paintings reflect her love of life and Bermuda. Her father's spirit is alive and well in her humour, hospitality and creative energy. The Birdsey Studio, in the back garden of the family home, remains a special place for many, with its tranquil natural setting and rather unusual appearance. Studio hours are 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. weekdays. Appointments are recommended.

**DOCKYARD GLASSWORKS  
GLASS GALLERY & WORKING STUDIO**

**1 Maritime Lane  
Royal Naval Dockyard, Sandys  
Tel: 234-4216**

**Website: dockglass.com**

Come see hot molten glass, like light on the move, as creations happen. Relax in their comfy theatre as you experience the expertise and drama. Lampwork artists prepare small sculptural collectable creatures, many native to the island. Shop in the colourful Glass Gallery at One Maritime Lane in Royal Naval Dockyard, open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and till 7 p.m. when ships are docked. Dockyard Glassworks Glass Gallery & Working Studio are recipients of TripAdvisor's Excellent Awards.

**MASTERWORKS MUSEUM  
OF BERMUDA ART**

**Botanical Gardens  
183 South Shore Rd., Paget  
Tel: 299-4000**

**Website: bermudamasterworks.com**

Masterworks is Bermuda's only purpose-built museum and is home to over 1,400 works of Bermuda-inspired art by such famous names as Winslow Homer, Albert Gleizes and Georgia O'Keeffe. Local artists are also on display throughout the year, and they also offer art courses in various mediums for all levels of experience. Children's art classes are available, and on one Saturday of the month, Super Saturday offers free art activities to all. The museum shop sells prints and original local art, and Homer's Café serves baked goods, gluten-free goods and lunch items. The Museum and Café are open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF BERMUDA**

**1 The Keep, Royal Naval Dockyard, Sandys  
Tel: 234-1333**

**Website: nmb.bm**

Immerse yourself in 500 years of history at the National Museum, housed within the island's largest fort. The 15-acre property includes British military buildings of the Keep citadel and the award-winning Commissioner's House. Inside its

historic limestone walls, learn about Bermuda's cultural links with the West Indies and the Azores, trans-Atlantic slavery, and the island's defence through two World Wars. Marvel at local artist Graham Foster's 1,000-square-foot mural of Bermuda history and other maritime art. Explore the collection of small local watercraft and *Shipwreck Island: Sunken Clues to Bermuda's Past*, an exhibit showcasing Spanish gold, colonial trade goods and other artefacts recovered from local shipwrecks. Open April through November, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (last admission at 4 p.m.); December through March, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (last admission at 4 p.m.). Adults, \$15; seniors, \$12; free for children under 16.

**STUDIO 8 GLASS**

**Clocktower Mall  
Royal Naval Dockyard, Sandys  
Tel: 704-4216**

**Website: studio8.glass**

Studio 8 Glass is a working glass fusing studio where they produce pieces of glass art for sale. Come along to Dockyard Glassworks or their new Clocktower Mall location to have a personal lesson or buy their custom-made snowflakes and jewellery. Lessons for jewellery take approximately two hours, and your items are ready for pickup the very next day, after being fired in their kilns. Create something unique and special with Studio 8 Glass.



Bermuda National Gallery, Lucy Davis, Georgine Hill