



by Andrea Milam

ARTFUL EXPRESSIONS



From the Bard of Avon to a legendary Beatle,
Bermuda has inspired artists of all types to create.



▲ **At Royal Naval Dockyard, you can see the island's artists and craftsmen at work and interact with the artisans.**

No one can say when inspiration will strike an artist, but certain places may lend themselves more to hosting visits from the muses than others... including Bermuda. Case in point: It's believed that William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was inspired by the sinking of the sailing vessel *Sea Venture*, which wrecked in Bermuda in 1609. Several centuries later, John Lennon's first visit to Bermuda ended his five-year-long creative drought. During a stroll through the Bermuda Botanical Gardens in Paget, Lennon glimpsed a double fantasy freesia flower, which lent its name to his final album — *Double Fantasy*.

Of course, art can spring from tragedy as well as beauty, and such was the case with Gombey. This African-derived performance art has its roots in slavery, which persisted in Bermuda until 1834. In that era, Africans were only allowed to dance and celebrate once a year, and with Gombey they used masks in order to protest injustices done by slavers whilst avoiding retribution. This eventually evolved into a spectacular art form that's featured during holidays and events, as Gombey troupes — sporting colourful costumes festooned with mirrors, bells and tassels — dazzle viewers with exquisitely choreographed moves. Every year in September, the annual Gombey Festival showcases the artistry of this tradition. You can also see Gombey dancers during some Harbour Nights (held every Wednesday in Hamilton from April 17 to September 4), at Destination Dockyard (held every Monday in Royal Naval Dockyard from July 1 to August 26), at Market Nights (held every Tuesday during the summer in St. George's) or at public celebrations and holidays.



GOOD LOOKING

To explore Bermuda's visual arts scene, start off with the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art, which features a permanent collection of more than 1,500 pieces that depict the beauty of Bermuda; these include works both by local artists and by renowned international painters like Georgia O'Keeffe and Winslow Homer.

You can also ask around to find out where the Bermuda Plein Air group is meeting; this is a group of 60+ artists that get together to paint outdoors. Members include Michele Smith, an oil painter who works as managing director at OBM International, and Christopher Marson, who is one of the island's most accomplished watercolourists. Whilst Michele and Chris's paintings tend to depict Bermuda scenery, island painter Kevin Morris draws inspiration from pop culture, music, books and current events to create detailed abstract works using dots and pop imagery.

Of course, there are many more places to soak in depictions of Bermudian beauty. For instance, the Bermuda





FINDING SCIENCE IN ART

Glass-blowing master Alan Avery uses his creativity to connect with the community.

BY THE TIME HE GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL, Alan Avery was no stranger to the art of glass-blowing. The son of Dockyard Glassworks owner Wendy Avery, Alan grew up around artists creating in this medium; but as he embarked upon his adulthood, the younger Avery was drawn to the sciences, biology and physics in particular. Ultimately, Alan decided to move towards the familiar, and he applied as an apprentice at Dockyard Glassworks. “Glass-blowing was always interesting to me,

but I wasn’t really passionate about it until I started doing it myself,” Alan says. “That’s when I realised it’s absolutely amazing.”

Alan credits the artists who have worked at the shop over the years — Peter Zimmerman, Christina Howarth and Stephen Zawistowski — with having a big influence over his own training. In turn, it’s the interactive experiences Alan has with those who visit the gallery that he lists high amongst his favourite things about glass-blowing.

“What I enjoy most is having someone come in for the first time to partake in a glass-blowing experience, and I walk them through making a little blown Christmas ornament,” says Alan. “Seeing them feel so excited about their accomplishment — I feed off that. I’m really big on community and having kids come in and try to guess what we’re making. The core of what I enjoy most is the people. The more people we can get to experience glass-blowing, the better.”

Interactive demonstrations are a daily weekday occurrence at Dockyard Glassworks, where visitors can observe delicate objects being coaxing from the molten glass by skilled artists, including Alan. Palm trees are one of Alan’s signature pieces, though he says he prefers creating functional works, such as drinking mugs, glasses, steins, vases and plates. The creative field of glass-blowing might seem a far cry from Alan’s initial inclination towards the sciences, but they’re actually more closely related than one might expect.

“You’re working with a hot liquid that wants to end up as a puddle on the floor, and you have to learn how to react and move and shape it so it goes into the form you want,” Alan says. “That’s the nature of physics — it relates to everything. And there’s a lot of science in how the different minerals react.”

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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.

For a more intimate experience, visit Jo Birdsey Linberg at The Birdsey Studio with its tranquil natural garden setting. Here you can enjoy her impressionistic landscapes, figurative paintings and whimsical animals that reflect her father's artistic legacy through simple lines and Oriental-inspired brushwork. And at Royal Naval Dockyard, you can see the island's artists and craftsmen at work and interact with the artisans as they sculpt collectable glass creations, make their salt-glazed thrown pottery, Bermuda cedar pieces, unique jewellery, candles and much more.

The Birdsey Studio








O'Keeffe Homer Karsh Pleissner

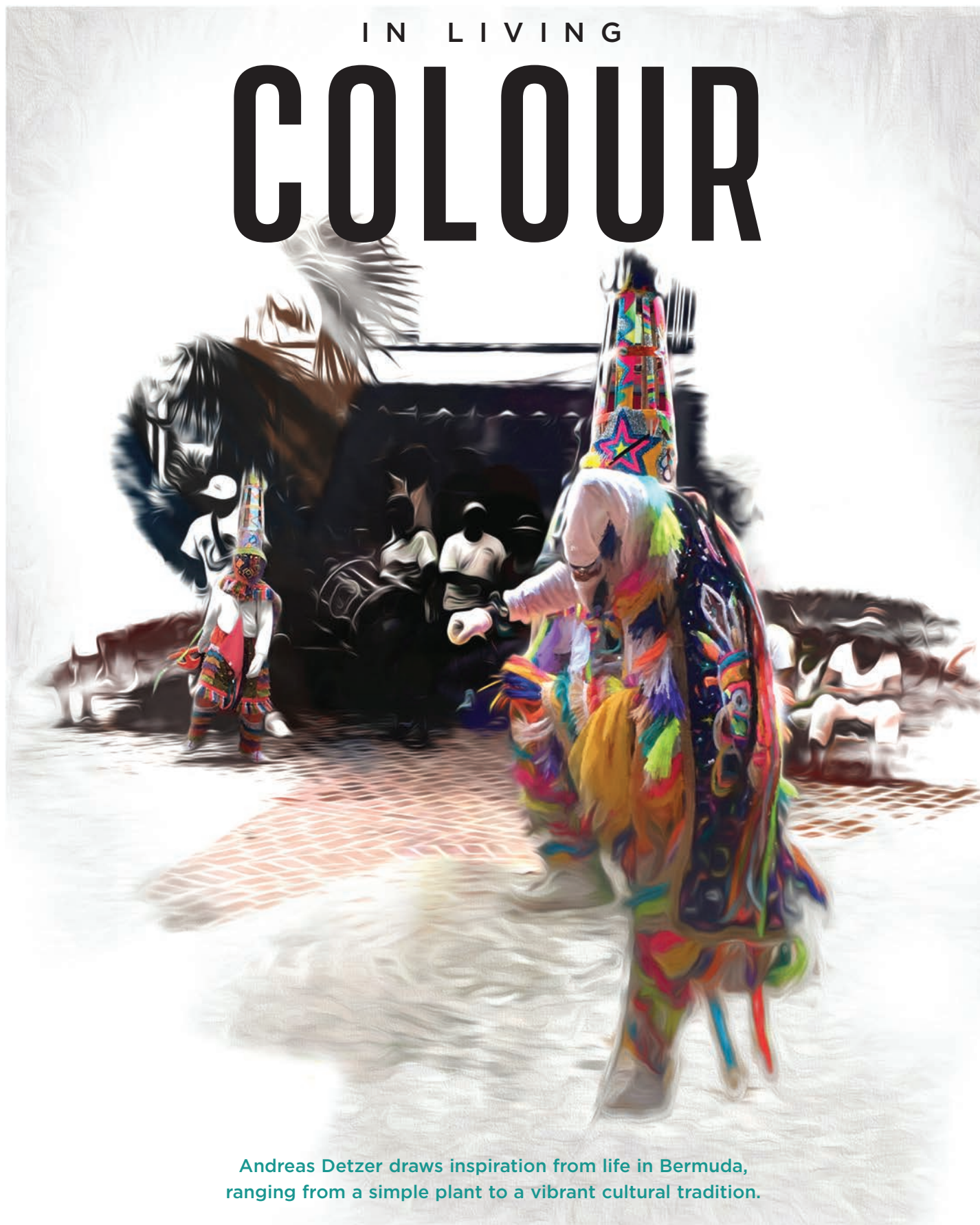
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IN LIVING
COLOUR



Andreas Detzer draws inspiration from life in Bermuda, ranging from a simple plant to a vibrant cultural tradition.

Andreas Detzer



LIKE MANY COMMUTERS WHO FIND THEIR MINDS WANDERING AS THEY DRIVE TO WORK,

Andreas “Andy” Detzer’s eyes get lost in the beautiful Bermudian landscape whilst travelling around the island in his capacity as general manager of Fourways Restaurant & Inn. But what he does with the various scenes he glimpses is anything but ordinary.

Though Andy doesn’t disclose the particulars of his method, one could say that he’s taken a creative, artistic approach to photography. One of his more humorous observations-turned-artwork is a series he’s dubbed *Kale Beach Bermuda*, an idea

that took root as he drove past a kale farm. “I grinned and said, ‘Hey, they look like palm trees. I can do something with this,’” Andy says of the deep green kale leaves emerging from the dirt. “I planted the kale at Horseshoe Bay and created a scene with figurines.”

These playful scenes were a departure for Andy, whose previous images, rich in vivid colour, leave the viewer wondering if they’re seeing a photograph or a painting. This is the angle he took when approaching a subject that’s synonymous with Bermudian culture — the Gombey. In their true form, these cultural icons, draped in bright fabrics, masks, bells, mirrors and tassels, are a vibrant connection to the island’s African ties. Andy’s treatment of the Gombey elevates their imagery to a brilliance so effusive, the images fizz and pop from the canvas. The

Gombey series debuted with a single at Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art in June 2018. That image sold before the official opening even began. Andy next showed his Gombey series at Gallery 117 —where his art is still displayed — to an overwhelming response.

“A lead Gombey from the Gombey Evolution Troupe came up to me and said, ‘Listen, I’ve been a Gombey for 20 years. I collect Gombey art, and people give me Gombey artefacts, and I’ve never seen anything like this,’” Andy recalls. “It was a huge compliment for me.”

A deal is in the works for one of Andy’s Gombey images to grace the side of a Titan tour bus, and through the art project, he says he’s fallen in love with the Gombey and their visual display.

“I’ve never really been a huge follower of the Gombey, but once I sat down at the computer to create this technique, I could feel the energy coming from the Gombey,” Andy says. “I was just blown away, and I wish I had more time to photograph them.”

Despite his success as an artist, Andy remains committed to what he loves most — hospitality at his full-time job with Fourways, which is sure to keep him criss-crossing the island as he

oversees the business’s various locations. And who knows what imaginative imagery his time on the road will inspire next...

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