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Sarasota Art Museum showcases works of Hermitage visual artists

The exhibition is the first collaboration between the two area cultural organizations.

By **Monica Roman Gagnier** | 5:00 a.m. April 17, 2024

For the recent nationwide AEP6 study by Americans for the Arts, the Arts & Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County identified more than 200 nonprofit arts and culture organizations in our area.

Now imagine what happens when those 200 arts groups start collaborating with each other. The cross-pollination possibilities are endless. Just look at the annual *Cirque du Voix*, a partnership between Key Chorale and the Circus Arts Conservatory, or this season's joint production by Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe and Sarasota Contemporary Dance.

The latest example of two cultural dynamos collaborating in Sarasota County is an exhibition called "Impact" at the contemporary Sarasota Art Museum filled with the works of fellows of the Hermitage Artist Retreat on Manasota Key.

"Impact" marks the first exhibition partnership between the 22-year-old Hermitage and SAM, a unit of Ringling College of Art and Design that officially opened in 2019. The result is mind-blowing, as they used to say back in the '60s.

Curated by Dan Cameron, who served on the Hermitage's National Curatorial Council for 10 years, "Impact: Contemporary Artists at the Hermitage Artist Retreat" includes 10 Hermitage Fellows representing a broad range of media — painting, sculpture, installation, photography, video, music, performance, conceptual art, ceramics, weaving and printmaking.

According to Cameron's statement, the works on display by Diana Al-Hadid, Sanford Biggers, Chitra Ganesh, Todd Gray, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Michelle Lopez, Ted Riederer, John Sims, Kukuli Velarde and William Villalongo push traditional boundaries of style and discipline while exploring themes and subjects that have affected the artists personally.

"The impact of 'Impact' lies as much in the striking visual narratives it presents as in its ability to provoke introspection in us and spark dialogue among us," says SAM Senior Curator Rangsook Yoon.

All 10 artists had the opportunity to take a break from their regular life and attend an artist residency at the Hermitage Artist Retreat's historic beachfront campus.

"There is something to be said about the physical impact that occurs when a hard-working creative person, whose typical working environment is likely a noisy metropolis, and whose

typical day is a string of deadlines and interruptions, wakes up on their first morning at the Hermitage — or their 11th morning — face to face with the splendor of the Gulf of Mexico stretching out to the horizon and the contours of the day ahead beckoning a mystery waiting to be revealed,” Cameron writes.

In exchange for the Gulf Coast hospitality of the Hermitage, the artists in residence agree to interact with the Sarasota community with a performance or an exhibit, in the case of visual artists.

According to Hermitage Artistic Director and CEO Andy Sandberg, many of the world-class artists who come to the Hermitage hadn't heard of Sarasota until they got here. "These are artists whose works are on display in galleries and museums around the world. This exhibition really raises the bar for visual arts in Sarasota," he says.

"It's such a privilege to be part of the birthing process of their art and then to come full circle and help introduce their work to the community," he adds..