



Dataaw Visual Arts Club: 2020 in Review

2020 turned out to be a challenging one for VAC, as it was for other Dataaw clubs and residents. The year started well, launched by our annual meeting on January 21. Special guest and local artist Aki Kato participated in a fireside chat with outgoing VAC President Marj Shymske; their conversation was inspiring on several levels. Aki's personal stories about growing up in Japan, traveling to the US as a near-penniless student and his continuing art journey were thought-provoking and motivational.

During the business meeting, the club's slate of officers was announced and approved. The 2020 Executive Board members were: President Kathy McShane; Vice President Dena Dardzinski, Treasurer Mike Allen and Secretary Debby Sovern. Additional board members included: Communications Chair Lynn Baker, Membership Chair Kathy Kelenski, Historian Dale Martin, Technology Chair Bill Riski, Exhibits Chair Bill Tremitiere, Fine Arts Education Chair Lyn Wilson and Past President Marj Shymske.

Immediately following the meeting, the opening night of the winter art exhibit, "Portraits", was held. With over 60 submissions, the theme inspired Dataaw artists in every medium. Aki Kato donned his juror's hat and selected the "First Prize/Juror's Choice" which was the photo "Portrait of a Sleeping Dog" by Tom Brady. Second place went to Mary Ann Berger for her oil painting, "Rita". Kathleen Ismail's photo "Son and Granddaughter" took third place. And those who attended the reception voted the People's Choice award to Anne Clements for her oil painting, "Aurelia". Also, Deborah Whalen received Honorable Mention for her hooked rug, "Dataaw Gator".

In March the pandemic hit and we went into lockdown mode. At the outset of the lockdown, a lot of us were at loose ends, feeling isolated and finding it difficult to focus. All of VAC's classes, workshops, and special events had to be canceled. But gradually, we figured out ways to not only stay creative but work together. Our Open Studio, Mixed Media, Clay, and Card Club groups figured out they could collaborate via Zoom, paint together in plein air, and meet in small groups with social distancing. As one of our members, Anne Clements, put it, "This connecting and sharing kept us a little more focused on our art, but even more importantly, it renewed our emotional connection with each other which all of us had missed desperately."

In addition, we organized several online challenges designed to help our members stay creative while spending more time at home.

Our first challenge, "Art in the Time of Confinement," asked our members to take a famous painting and recreate it using whatever materials they had to hand. We had close to 25 creative interpretations. As our juror, Barb Carakostas, put it, "As we learn to cope with the social restrictions and the boredom of our "COVID Confinement," it is evident that when the going gets tough, Dataw residents get creative."

The original painting (left) and the winning interpretation (right) by Lynn Baker, entitled "Survival in the Time of Confinement," are shown below.



We turned to literature for our next challenge, reaching out to the entire Dataw community to tell us, in the form of a haiku, what they were most looking forward to doing when they could resume normal activities. We compiled the 45 entries into an electronic booklet entitled "[Life after Lockdown](#)" and distributed it to the island to enjoy. As you might imagine, many of the poems dealt with being able to hug family, travel, and once again gather with friends.

Next up was "The View from My Window," which asked members to capture the scene from their window, be it real or imaginary, with or without the window frame, in any medium they chose. The photo below is Bev Porter's submission.



Our Art of Communication challenge randomly matched up pairs of Dataw residents to find what unique connection they had. Here's what we found:

1. Nobody noticed a particularly unique connection with the person he or she was matched up with.
2. The experiences of Dataw residents in their prior lives were more unique and diverse than you might think.
3. Participants had a good time getting to know someone they had never met before or knew only slightly.

The winners of this challenge perfected the Art of Communication. They submitted a detailed list of the things they found in common, including favorite foods, films, and sports to a pet peeve.

VAC's Photography Club was challenged to create shots that fit into assigned categories. One example was “heat”, which is not easy to capture in a photo. Bill Riski managed to do so masterfully in “Comet NEOWISE over Dataw Marina”.



Our next challenge was to submit a photo of something that looks like something else. We posted all the entries on the VAC website and asked the Dataw community to vote for their favorite. The People’s Choice Award went to Bill Tremiere for his photo, “Help I’m Trapped in a Dataw Tree”.



In October, blessed with gorgeous weather, we were able to host An Afternoon in the Park, a fall festival in the Marina Gazebo and surrounding grounds. Dataw residents gathered to celebrate autumn with live music by the RKs, food, produce and, naturally, beautiful arts and crafts. Other clubs were invited to participate: we were joined by the Garden Club, the Dataw Quilters and the Dataw Island Yacht club. With the generosity of our members, we held a raffle whose proceeds were donated to the very worthy Good Neighbor Clinic on St. Helena Island. It was a perfect opportunity to experience an autumn fair while maintaining safety precautions (masks and social distancing).



RKs at VAC's *Afternoon in the Park*

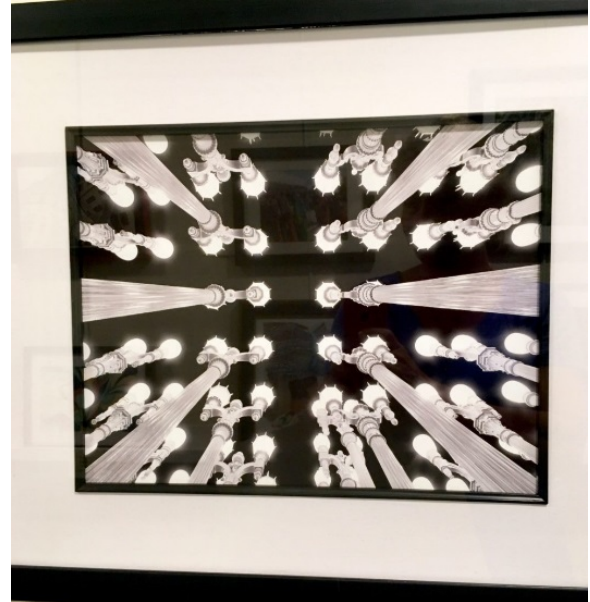


Pasture Shed
Farms' Produce Stand

Although we were not able to host an opening reception for our Fall Quarterly exhibit, *Patterns*, we did, with the efforts of a talented and dedicated group of volunteers, create a beautifully staged exhibit with fifty entries. Kit Porter, a local artist from Beaufort, juried the exhibit. Residents were encouraged to visit the exhibit and to vote for Peoples' Choice. Kit's first place awards for art and photography went to, respectively, Anne Clements and Andrew Smith.



Anne Clements, *Marsh Squared*



Andrew Smith, *Light Reach*

The VAC usually holds its annual Holiday Boutique in the Community Center in mid-November. The pandemic made holding an indoor market impossible. However, with some creative thinking on the part of the Holiday Boutique committee, a Mistletoe Market Crawl was organized. Vendors set up their wares in their own front yards or garages. Shoppers were given maps to the vendors' locations, hopped in their golf carts or cars and made the rounds. At the Cannery, decorated by the Club, shoppers could renew their VAC membership, have a glass of wine, or purchase snacks offered by the Club. They could also purchase masks that had been made and decorated by VAC members. The proceeds from the mask sale were donated to the Employee Holiday Fund in recognition of their outstanding efforts on behalf of Dataw residents during a challenging year. Vendors liked the format; shoppers enjoyed making the rounds; safety precautions were maintained...it was a perfect solution.

Thank you to Laura McCarthy for creating a terrific logo for our Mistletoe Market.



Mask Making Workshop



Mistletoe Market Vendors on Spring Well



Left to Right: Sandy McManamon, Volunteers Chair; Mary Ann Foutch, Mistletoe Market Committee; Kathy McShane, VAC President; Marj Shymske, Mistletoe Market Chair and VAC Past President; Valerie Hatcher, Mistletoe Market Committee; Kathy Kelenski, Membership Chair

In November, our Mixed Media group began brainstorming about a collaborative endeavor that could include a community outreach component. One of the group mentioned that her mother resides at Helena Place and the idea of creating small, holiday-themed art pieces to decorate their communal areas was born. In a span of two weeks, nine members of the group completed fourteen pieces which were delivered to the facility in early December.



Throughout the year, we have provided members with online resources designed to stir their creativity and enhance their knowledge of artworks, artists, and art history. Some resources were links to virtual exhibits, lists of novels and films about art and artists, and TV series that focus on museums and famous artworks. Others were short articles focusing on various aspects of arts and crafts, some of which are posted on our website under the Blog tab, The Art Connection. Many thanks go out the VAC members who have shared a wide range of enlightening and entertaining resources and ideas for articles.

We are hoping that, in 2021, we will be able to start offering in person classes and workshops again, to host our quarterly receptions for our quarterly exhibits, show some films, go on a field trip, conduct studio tours, organize team art challenges... all those activities VAC members have come to enjoy. We are still in a time of uncertainty, but what we have discovered this year, we have the resilience and creativity to adapt.