

An abstract painting of a sailboat, featuring bold, expressive brushstrokes in shades of brown, yellow, and blue. The sail is a large, bright yellow shape, while the hull and rigging are rendered in darker, more textured strokes. The overall style is impressionistic and dynamic.

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Paint Wilmington! April 25 – 30

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Paint Wilmington!

Nationally Known Artists Capture the Port City on Canvas

By **Daniel Bendin**

Paint Wilmington! is an invitational art event that brings a mix of nationally known masters and some up-and-comers to North Carolina for five days of painting the Port City's marshlands, downtown settings, farmlands, beaches and woodlands.

This year it will be Perry Austin, Tim Bell, Gavin Brooks, Ken Dewaard, Robert Isley, John Poon, Steve Songer, Jerry Smith, Cindy Baron and Robert Hagberg who, from April 25 through April 30, will be setting up their easels throughout the Wilmington area.

Alabama painter **Perry Austin** has an innate love of the landscape, both as an artist and an angler. When he paints the rapids of a rocky stream, you feel your toes go numb.



Perry Austin painting in a Wilmington boat yard during last year's event.

Tim Bell is a true American impressionist. Recent awards for the resident of Maryland include "Best Marine Painting" and "Artist's Choice Award" at the fifth annual Plein Air Easton! in 2009.

Also from Maryland, **Gavin Brooks** was exposed to wilderness and its magic during childhood river trips and hikes along the Appalachian Trail. She says, "I am interested in creating a wholeness in my

paintings; harmony and color relationships that unify the natural elements of trees, pasture, water and sky."

Ken DeWaard, inspired by John Singer Sargent and the Russian impressionists, is known for his everyday subject matter as much as his color nuances and harmonies.

Robert Isley likes to paint small. The Savannah artist is well known for his extraordinary paintings of utterly ordinary scenes.

Receiving one national award after another, including Best Landscape in the Arts For the Parks national show in Jackson, Wyoming, Utah's **John Poon** paints light as though it is his own creation



Here is Idaho's John Poon happily at work, not minding the snow at all.

Another Utah painter, **Steve Songer** has been named by Southwest Art as an "Artist to Watch" and the talented artist has also been featured on Art of the West magazine.

Indiana artist **Jerry Smith** works in both watercolor and



Gavin Brooks talks about her marsh painting for a film crew last year.

oil. He was introduced to plein air painting in a workshop taught by Don Stone in Rockport, Mass.

Cindy Baron, bringing another Indiana perspective, also works in both oil and watercolor. When asked how she decides which medium to use, she answers, "Nature chooses it for me."

Ohio's **Robert Hagberg** grew up with a camera in his hand, but now prefers to use a brush. His ultra-realistic painting style has evolved into a more painterly presentation.

Working quickly to beat the changing light and weather conditions, all these artists will astound you as they create one painting after another right in front of you.

The accomplished plein air painters will also share painterly tips and philosophies during a number of lunchtime



Violet Hills by Jerry Smith.

presentations back at the gallery. Two artists each day will answer questions, give a painting demonstration and offer a rare glimpse into their painting processes. Space is limited, so although there is no charge for the sessions, tickets are required. Call the gallery (910-343-1703) to order your tickets.

After five days of painting, Walls Fine Art Gallery will host an exhibition of the new paintings along with larger, studio

paintings previously completed by the artists. The show opens at 6 p.m. on April 30.

This is a rare opportunity to view works by internationally acclaimed artists who consistently paint at a museum level.

Walls Gallery is located at 2173 Wrightsville Ave. in Wilmington, N.C. For more information about Paint Wilmington! or to check the presentation schedule, visit the website: www.wallsgallery.com.



Robert Isley is known for his urban settings. This is his Cape Fear River Bridge.



Steve Songer's *A Day's Work*.



From Indiana native Cindy Baron, *Endurance*.