

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Jacqui Roch made her debut appearance as “Ding” Darling’s artist in residence at “Ding” Darling Day in April at Lakes Park.

‘Ding’ announces its 2022-23 artist in residence

The J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island began an artist-in-residence program in 2019 as part of its 75th Anniversary Celebration, with plans to continue it in years to follow. As Sanibel artist Rachel Pierce finishes her term, started in 2021 but delayed by COVID complications, the refuge, with support from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), announces Miami artist Jacqueline Roch for its 2022-2023 program.

Born in California and raised on Miami Beach, Roch, known as “Jacqui” to friends, terms her style “tropical realism.” Her greatest local inspiration has been, she says, the Everglades and Big Cypress National Preserve, where she spends much of her time painting plein air. She has recently found inspiration, too, at “Ding” Darling.

“One of my first pastel paintings was of a small area on Wildlife Drive that shows some mangroves and that dark clear water,” said Roch. “I titled it Looking for Snook, and it is one of the few paintings I still have in my possession. It is one of my husband’s favorites and he has hung it in our sons’ nursery for each of their births.”

Roch’s fine art pastels capture Florida’s natural beauty – from River of Grass panoramas to detailed portraits of flowers and seashells. She considers herself a purist with pastels, using no other embellishments for her works and never reproducing her art. Every piece is one-of-a-kind.

With a background in art education from the University of Miami and Florida International University in Miami, Roch has been teaching art since 1992, starting in the Miami-Dade County School District. She currently teaches at Miami’s Bakehouse Art Complex. She plans to offer her artist-in-residence programs and activities during weekend and other visits to “Ding” Darling through June 30, 2023.

Roch has already stepped into her new role as a plein-air demonstrator at “Ding” Darling Day at Lakes Park on April 24. She will appear regularly at the refuge in coming months to do pop-up, plein-air painting along Wildlife Drive; teach art to children and adults on-site and through digital media; visit youth facilities to help create art; and mount an exhibition of her refuge-inspired and other wildlife art in the Visitor & Education Center auditorium, as has become artist-in-residence tradition, from Sept. 1 to the end of October, 2022,

“I am so thrilled to be able to call myself artist in residence at this wonderful, natural oasis,” Roch said. “It’s like getting the backstage pass to meet your favorite band. You really get to immerse yourself in a space that may sometimes be off limits to most and, even better, you meet the people who live and work so hard to maintain the space.”

“Our refuge was created by conservation artist Jay Norwood ‘Ding’ Darling in 1945, so our artist-in-residence program honors that history and tradition,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “Darling created the Federal Duck Stamp program and designed the first duck stamp and the refuge system’s Blue Goose logo. He won the Pulitzer Prize twice for his political cartoons, which were syndicated across the country throughout the 1920s and five decades.”

The refuge’s artist program began in 2019 with Idaho wildlife journal artist Ed Anderson, who worked with children from Quality Life Center of Southwest Florida in Fort Myers and Pace Center for Girls -- Lee County plus visitors to the refuge for his special programs and exhibition. Pierce continued the tradition, creating a Community Mural at the refuge with the help and hands of residents and visitors of all ages.

For more information about the “Ding” Darling artist-in-residence program, visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/artist-in-residence.

ABOUT DDWS

As a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, DDWS works to support J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge’s mission of conservation, wildlife and habitat protection, research, and public education through charitable donations and Refuge Nature Shop profits.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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