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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
Contact: Chelle Koster Walton
239-699-4754
ChelleKWalton@gmail.com

Caption: Jacqui Roch demonstrated plein-air techniques at the 2022 “Ding” Darling Day Conservation Carnival.

‘Ding’ retains 2022-23 artist in residence for current season

The J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island began its artist-in-residence program in 2019 as part of a 75th Anniversary Celebration, with plans to continue in years to follow. For its 2023-2024 season, the refuge, with support from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), holds over award-winning Miami artist Jacqueline Roch due to Hurricane Ian’s interruption of her 2022-23 term.

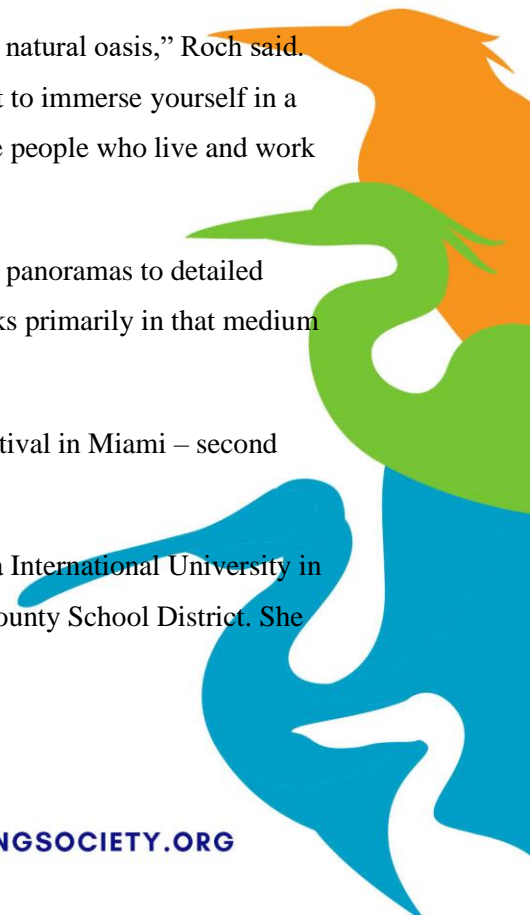
Born in California and raised on Miami Beach, Roch, known as “Jacqui” to friends, terms her style “tropical realism.” Her greatest local inspiration had been the Everglades and Big Cypress National Preserve, where she still spends much of her time painting plein air. She has now found inspiration, too,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

“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 and help the refuge recover post-hurricane.”

Roch’s fine art pastels capture Florida’s natural beauty – from River of Grass panoramas to detailed portraits of flowers and seashells. She considers pastels her passion, and works primarily in that medium to create collectible, one-of-a-kind works.

The artist recently won two awards at the prestigious Coconut Grove Arts festival in Miami – second place in 2022 and bronze in 2023.

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.





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Roch enthusiastically stepped into her role as “Ding” artist in residence, starting in April 2022 at the “Ding” Darling Day celebration at Lakes Park in Fort Myers. Throughout the following months, she held programs at the refuge and in the community. Shortly before Ian struck on Sept. 28, she mounted an exhibition of her refuge-inspired work in the Visitor & Education Center. Luckily, all her paintings were safely relocated and protected when the hurricane blew through.

Roch will continue her workshops and indoor and plein-air demonstrations at the refuge and for outreach programs, including the April 22 “Ding” Darling Day at Lakes Park this year. Stay tuned to learn more about upcoming events and exhibitions this season through June 2024.

“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. Sanibel artist Rachel 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 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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