

PRESS RELEASE
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For additional information and images, please contact Paula Martiesian at 401-521-7634 or at artsong5354@gmail.com. Attached images: Monica Shinn exploring Prudence Island and untitled bird construction by Shinn.

The BankRI Galleries present:

BankRI Turks Head Gallery: “Prudence Island: Paintings, Drawings and Constructions by Monica Shinn,” March 2 through May 3, 2023.. The branch is located at One Turks Head Place in downtown Providence. Hours are Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The branch is closed on weekend. There will be two Gallery Night Providence receptions on March 16 and April 20 from 4 to 6:30 pm. For more information, contact www.bankri.com or call the branch at 401 456-5152.



MEET THE ARTIST –MONICA SHINN

There’s not a sidewalk, nor street light or restaurant in sight. Six miles long and only one mile wide, Prudence Island might as well be on another planet, but it is only a twenty minute ferry ride from Bristol, RI. Barrington artist Monica Shinn spent three years exploring the island as the second artist-in-residence of the Prudence Island Artistic Residency Program. Developed by Sheryl Kopel, the residency takes place at the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NBNERR) located on the south side of the island.

Over the course of three years, Shinn visited the island several times, exploring the coastline, the backroads and the undeveloped island landscape. She researched the history of the island, originally inhabited by the Narragansett and Wampanoag peoples. She read up on the climate, marsh reclamation, the fishing industry, wetlands and the Luminist painters of New England. She absorbed what makes Prudence Prudence.

Shinn had help. The staff at NBNERR, led by reserve manager Caitlin Chaffee and , director of education Maureen DeWire, worked with Shinn and Kopel to help develop the residency. But the reserve is ultimately a research station, a place where science, education and study work towards creating a sustainable future for the land and ocean.

For such a small slip of land, Prudence has several neighborhoods and areas. On the east is the ferry landing, a convenience store and the largest concentration of homes on the island. On the south end of the island is a T-wharf, the reserve and an abandoned tract of land that still has Navy bunkers from World War II. On the north end, you will find the dump where the island residents bring their garbage and the Garland Mansion, an impressive stone structure surrounded by seven hundred acres of land. The west side has a sprinkling of homes, all unique in their own way including an octagonally-shaped house perched above the ocean. Only a few hundred people live on the island full time.

Shinn explored it all. The three-year time period gave her the luxury of really getting to know the island and the artwork she produced reflects her love of place. Shinn says “The time I spent on Prudence Island influenced my artistic life by giving me the opportunity to study nature without any predetermined outcome.”

Creative exploration is never straightforward. It’s a gathering process. One small piece of information – a word, an image, or an impression – can spark an idea that coalesces into a body of work. “I spent a great amount of time just wandering around the south of the island,” Shinn says. “Days and days of just looking at everything and smelling things and listening to the wind, sea and birds, observing the changes in the seasons and the weather.” During her residency, Shinn produced three distinct bodies of work – paintings, sketches and constructions. The BankRI Galleries are showcasing all a sampling of all three.

Her paintings are novellas in color and line, stories that describe the ordinary everyday landscape of life with a distilled sense of wonder and deep foundation of empathy. The paint can be thick or thin, with both large single swatches of color or smaller dabs. In both her paintings and drawings, she uses a line that is descriptively exquisite and deceptively simple.

The constructions are a relatively new endeavor for Shinn. Although painting is Shinn’s core, she is also a welder and set designer, adept at many things. The constructions combine her talents to tell stories on a very small stage.

Visit the Research Reserve on Prudence Island to see 24 of Shinn's large format paintings and drawings on view through April 2023.

The BankRI Galleries are curated by Paula Martiesian, a Providence-based artist and arts advocate.

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