

Newport News Arts

“Contemporary” and “cutting edge” are apt adjectives to describe the arts scene in Newport News, according to Mike McGrann of the Peninsula Fine Arts Center (PFAC), one of many arts venues in the Tidewater city of 180,000. McGrann believes that the arts “build a better community” and he welcomes out-of-town visitors to experience the city’s many offerings. Whether you’re an arts aficionado or someone seeking creative inspiration, you’ll find the arts scene in Newport News is alive and well.

On exhibit through March 21 at PFAC is “Carlton Abbott: Then and Now, A Retrospective of Art and Architecture.” Abbott, a native Virginian who lives and works in Williamsburg, has devoted his life to combining beauty and function. His expertise extends beyond architecture to landscape design, urban planning, sculpture, and graphic arts.

Another exhibit worth noting, according to Suzanne Pearson, who promotes Newport News, is the juried youth art exhibit that opens during the Battle of Hampton Roads Weekend at the Mariners’ Museum and runs through Aug. 15. Children ages four to 18 will submit original artwork depicting the battle between the *USS Monitor* and the *CSS Virginia*, Civil War ironclads that fought for control of the Hampton Roads harbor. Entrants will vie for prizes in three age categories. Besides the youth art exhibit, Mariners’ Museum also has a decorative arts exhibit called “Art of the Sea,” as well as a unique collection of figureheads, ship models, and photographs.

Performance Art, Too

Visitors to Newport News will find plenty of performance arts offerings, especially at the state-of-the-art Ferguson Center for the Arts on the campus of Christopher Newport University. On March 16, the internationally acclaimed Canadian Brass shares its popular brand of music. Also featured the same evening is Irish tenor John McDermott, who will sing “Songs of the Isles.” On March 19, watch the awe-inspiring feats of The Peking Acrobats,

who demonstrate astonishing dexterity and incredible balance accompanied by traditional Chinese music and high-tech special effects. *Jesus Christ Superstar* explodes on stage at the Ferguson on March 21 with Ted Neeley in the starring role and amazing songs you know by heart.

Pearson believes the Ferguson Center offers a “really good mix” of shows. The center has been successful, she says, because the shows “appeal to both older and younger generations.”

Art to Take Home

If you’re in the market to buy a new piece of art in Newport News, the Peninsula Fine Arts Center displays the work of local artists in its gift shop. “I always like to bring home a piece of art as a souvenir when I go somewhere new,” says McGrann.

Another stop on an art lovers’ itinerary is JSL Fine Arts in the Port Warwick development. Original art, including landscapes, abstract, and portraits, grace the walls of the gallery. And if you can’t make up your mind which piece to take home, owner Julie Brinkley offers you the option of renting the artwork. That way you can see how it looks in your home before making the final purchase.

From visual arts to performing arts, Newport News will get your creative juices flowing this spring

By Peggy Sijswerda

BEFORE YOU GO

Newport News Tourism: 888-493-7386, www.newport-news.org
Ferguson Center for the Arts: 757-594-7488, fergusoncenter.cnu.edu
PFAC: 757-596-8175, www.pfac-va.org

Virginia Beach

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the Tomistoma, the world’s most endangered crocodile.

Sahara Desert Meets the Mediterranean Sea resembles the Virginia area during the Silurian period. Minerals left behind when an ancient sea evaporated can still be found in the state. You’ll see cobras, hedgehogs, and seahorses among the animals.

During the Triassic period, Virginia was along the rift zone that led to the creation of the Atlantic Ocean. An 8,000-gallon aquarium holds delicate live coral and you can walk through a 40-foot-long tunnel surrounded by the 100,000-gallon *Red Sea* aquarium that features some of the most beautiful fish in the world.

Indonesia’s Flores Island represents a time when Virginia was dominated by the volcanic activity that created Mount Rogers, the state’s highest peak. In this exhibit, you’ll find Komodo dragons, the world’s largest lizard, and uniquely colored Indonesian finches.

More Recent History

It might seem odd to think of the well-known resort area as historical, but Virginia Beach is where the Jamestown settlers made their first landing in 1607. First Landing State Park is the state’s most visited, but there are other Colonial-era spots to check out as well.

The Adam Thoroughgood House (circa 1680) is one of the oldest brick houses in America and you can enjoy the recently restored gardens when the site reopens on March 31. Among the other historic homes still standing is the Ferry Plantation House, originally built in 1642 when Adam Thoroughgood started a ferry service. The present house dates to 1830 and was built with bricks from a 1740 version. The Francis Land House (late 1700s) represents the gentry-class homes of the 18th and early 19th centuries. More information on these and other historic sites you can visit is listed in the history section of the vbfun.com website.

By Jane and Marvin Bond

BEFORE YOU GO

Virginia Beach Tourism: 800-VA-BEACH, www.vbfun.com

Nature Illustrator Charley Harper's Works Exhibited for First Time

Works by master illustrator and artist Charley Harper (1922-2007), will be on exhibit at the Virginia Living Museum in Newport News through April 25.

Best known for his highly stylized wildlife prints, posters, and book illustrations, Harper called his style “minimal realism,” capturing the essence of his subjects with the fewest possible visual elements. His nature-oriented artwork is often contrasted with the realism of John James Audubon and the simplicity found in Inuit Art.

This is the first exhibit of Harper’s work in Virginia and includes student artwork and hands-on art activities based on Harper’s style.

The Virginia Living Museum’s regular exhibits explore the nature of Virginia from the mountains to the sea. There are hands-on activities, planetarium, boardwalk with animals in naturalized habitats, native plants, and a living-green exhibit.

For information, visit www.thevlm.org

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