



Instructor Holly Roberts offers advice to artist Langley Tolbert during the October art colony.

# Art Colony Grows

Sarah Carlisle Towery Art Colony brings 54 artists to Lake Martin

STORY & PHOTOS BY KENNETH BOONE

**O**ctober saw the largest-ever meeting of the Sarah Carlisle Towery Art Colony on Lake Martin.

Margaret George, president of the Alabama Art Colony organization that hosts the annual fall artist gathering as well as the Kitty Dark Kids Arts Camp in June, said the number of both artists and instructors at the Art Colony increased dramatically this year. The event drew artists from across the Southeast, including students from North Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia and Florida.

“We had three instructors and 54 artists participating,” George said. “A lot of women from the Mississippi Art Colony came. They brought a lot of experience and fun. There were a lot of new faces this year ... We couldn’t have asked for better weather.”

George said that this year was the first time that visiting artists had the chance to use the new Harbor Lodge facilities, and it was a big hit.

“The artists loved it because they had their own individual space and they could meet on the porches and chat and discuss their philosophies on art,” she said. “They thought (Harbor Lodge) was a perfect place for a retreat.”

In recent years, the Art Colony featured two art instructors, and artists ranging from amateurs to professionals chose to paint with one during the week. But because of the large number of artists

who registered, three instructors were hired to lead the 2008 colony.

This year’s instructors were Roger Dale Brown, a plein air artist from Nashville; Holly Roberts from Corrales, N.M., who is nationally known for her collages; and Hugh Williams, an art professor emeritus from Auburn University who focuses on avant garde styles of art incorporating unusual materials.

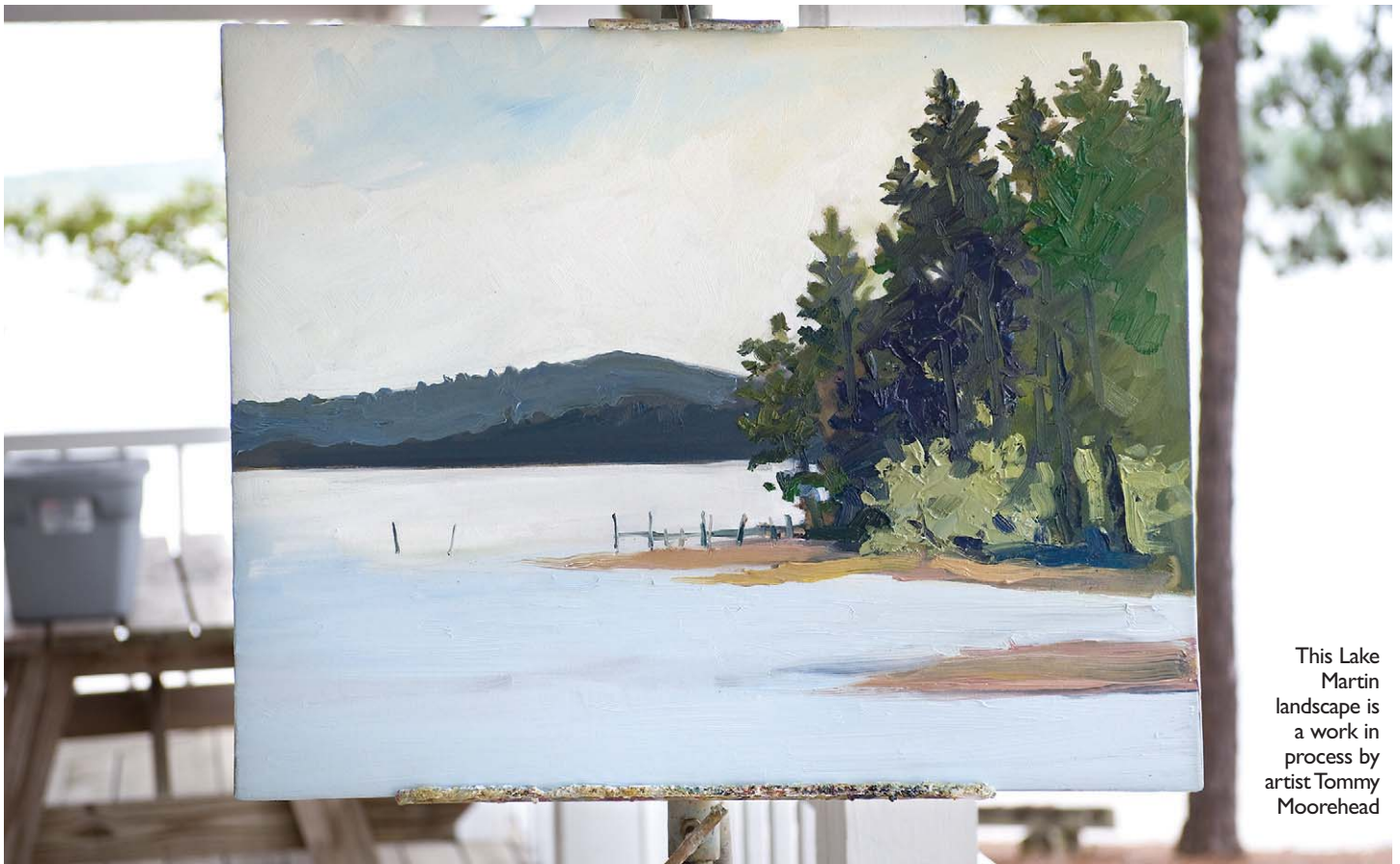
Roberts, who works with layers of materials that often include photographs and paint, was teaching in the Harbor Lodge facility, while the two other classes met at Children’s Harbor.

“Basically, what I am an expert in teaching is layering media,” she said, explaining that “media” could be anything from dirt and leaves to paint and photos. “Just anything you want to make your painting.”

Roberts said she began her career as a painter, which led her to experiment with oil over acrylic paints, and that led her down the path to the collages that earned her national fame. She said she used to paint on black and white photographs, and now often works with photos placed over paint.

“I think it became just a really interesting way to get to your creative self,” she said of her collages. “There’s real pleasure in marrying the different things that shouldn’t work ... but do.”

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This Lake Martin landscape is a work in process by artist Tommy Moorehead

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In trying to decide what to put together in a piece, Roberts says she uses “visual intelligence.”

“That’s what I do for a living, I look at things,” she said. “I love to paint and I love photographs.”

She said working in the new Harbor Lodge facility was a treat.

“It’s just a gorgeous place, brand new and state of the art,” she said, describing the conference center and audio visual equipment. “I did a presentation last night and everything was brand new.”

The Art Colony is named in honor of Alexander City painter Sarah Carlisle Towery, who died last year. It began as a birthday celebration for “Miss Sarah,” as she was affectionately known, where she and her friends got together on the lake to paint in the fall. Instructor Hugh Williams participated in the original get-together for Towery’s 80th birthday in 1992.

“We’ve come full circle because at this one, we celebrated his 80th birthday,” George said.

Over the years, the Art Colony has grown into a much larger, more public event, and it is now supported financially in part by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding comes from tuition and other donations.

“We gave four full scholarships this year, three of them were through the generosity of Carlisle Towery,” George said of “Miss Sarah’s” son.

This year’s Art Colony was held Oct. 6-10. The \$525 tuition included room, meals and five days of professional art instruction.

“We served breakfast and a country lunch, and then heavy hors d’ourves at night which is provided by different galleries in the area,” George said. Red Hill Gallery, Stonehenge and MacDavid & Co. galleries hosted evening receptions for the event, when instructors spoke to the whole group. On Thursday night the colony held

a public reception where artists offered works for sale.

George said she thinks there are a number of reasons that the Art Colony is growing.

“We respect different traditions of art,” she said, explaining that the artists have a number of different artistic styles of instruction to choose from. “Our instructors come from different backgrounds.”

She said the excellent facilities and the location on Lake Martin are a big draw.

“And I credit the board with a lot of hard work,” she said.

“We think it’s going to get bigger and better every year,” George said. “We think the future is very rosy ... it’s also indigo and lemon yellow and cadmium red! Seriously, we’re growing and we are thrilled to be attracting nationally respected instructors and students who are featured in galleries around the southeast.”

For more information on the Sarah Carlisle Towery Art Colony on Lake Martin, visit the organization’s Web site: [www.alart-colony.org](http://www.alart-colony.org).

**2008 ART COLONY AWARD WINNERS**

**Artwork purchased for the Art Colony’s permanent collection**

Jamie Tate – “Stoneville Woods”

Rosalyn O’Grady – “Morning Dunes”

**\$250 Merit awards**

Melanie Morris – “Soli deo Gloria”

Kay Vinson - “Red Torso”

**\$150 Merit awards**

Melody Bogle – “Cerulean Park at Watercolor”

Cecily Hulett – “Dark/Light”

**Peer Award**

Nan Cunningham – “Tang Horse”

**Children’s Harbor Christmas card selections**

Marcia Hodges – “Life is a Gift”

Kathy Dyleski – “Noel”