



Tumbleweeds by artist Dorothy Gillespie are displayed by the Welcome Garden. [CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]

#### GROW WITH EXTENSION

## Arboretum hosts works by Dorothy Gillespie



Lloyd Singleton

Dorothy Gillespie was a remarkable person; I wish I had met her while she was alive. I first learned of her and her art through a theme park horticulture colleague and friend from Orlando, Katy Moss Warner. Katy now serves as President of America in Bloom and President Emeritus of the American Horticultural Society. Previously, during Katy's tenure as Director of Disney's Horticulture from 1976-2000, she brought Dorothy Gillespie's work to Epcot Center grounds in a big way. Last year, Katy reached out to me about the planned celebration to bring more of Gillespie's work to her beloved Wilmington. Distinctive, bright and made for the outdoors, this garden art would make a great addition to the grounds of the Arboretum. So the work began with the local committee for our Friends of the Arboretum to support and participate.

On Monday of this week was the kickoff for a local celebration of this famed New York City artist with strong ties to the Wilmington community. Dorothy would have been 100 years old, and over fifty people gathered virtually to hear stories of her life from Thalian Hall Center's Tony Rivenbark and words of admiration from City of Wilmington's Mayor Bill Saffo and New Hanover County Commissioner Rob Zapple. Frances Hawk serves as the celebration's organizer working with the artist's son, Gary Gillespie Israel and others of our local arts community.

The Arboretum is honored to join the Cameron Art Museum in hosting some of the collection originally displayed in New York City's Rockefeller Center. Our Gatehouse

walls are decorated with six brightly colored enamel on aluminum panels, and the Welcome Garden is cheery with the colorful addition of tumbleweeds. The Cameron Art Museum is showcasing much of the beautiful vertical art in totems and wall hangings. This traveling exhibit joins permanent local installations at the Thalian Hall Center for Performing Arts, University of North Carolina Wilmington's Cultural Arts Building and the Wilson Center at Cape Fear Community College.

In Rob Zapple's words, Dorothy Gillespie was, and still is, an American icon in the art world. A native of Roanoke, Virginia, she traveled the world with her husband and children and these life experiences surely had an influence on the way she created her works of art whether it be a painting, sculpture, or installation work. She never wanted to be treated like a woman artist; she always wanted to be recognized as just an artist. However, her influence on the women's art movement is immeasurable. She led the way to have art displayed in public institutions and centers nationwide.

Incorporating art in a public garden is a good way to engage visitors and contribute to the overall sensory experience. We, the N.C. Cooperative Extension, New Hanover County Center at the Arboretum are proud to be a part of this local celebration of the artist Dorothy Gillespie and to display some of her beautiful works. This installation will be in place through March of 2021; we invite you to come visit to experience for yourself.

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