



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**21ST ANNUAL MATTIE KELLY ARTS FOUNDATION
FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS SHOWCASES
100 VISUAL ARTISTS AND SIX MUSIC ACTS**

*The 2016 Festival welcomes 31 new artists and guest artist A.J. Brown,
a second generation Florida Highwayman*

DESTIN, FLA. — (Sept. 19, 2016) Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) celebrates the cultural arts by enhancing the offerings of its annual Festival of the Arts set for Oct. 29–30 at the scenic MKAF Cultural Arts Village in Destin, Florida, on the Northwest Florida Gulf Coast.

One of the Southeast's premier art festivals, the two-day signature event features exhibits of more than 100 artists from 10 states (and one from Europe) showcasing a diverse palette of artistic styles in 15 different art mediums.

This year the Festival welcomes guest artist A.J. Brown, a second generation Florida Highwayman from Fort Pierce, Florida.

The original Highwaymen were 26 self-taught African American painters, who in the 1950s realized that they couldn't sell their work in white-owned galleries, so they took to the road selling their scenes of beaches, sea and wildlife for \$25 from their car trunks on area roadways. Today, many of the remaining Highwaymen are still on the road selling their works, but thankfully the world is more welcoming and their art is highly valued selling for thousands of dollars.

"The Festival has always been a celebration of art," said MKAF Artist Market Chair Deb Nissley. "We are honored A.J. Brown was able to join us to share her legacy story through her lovely art work. Growing through the discovery of art is what we strive to do and we're sure Festival goers will find this component both inspirational and educational."

Art lovers of all ages will be able to watch artists create works of art before your eyes, browse art from dozens of emerging new and student artists, and get hands-on in the interactive children's art station. Beyond the visual arts, the Festival will feature two days of continual live music and a sampling of the local culinary arts scene. Entertaining street performers, lively art drawings and the sale of colorful keepsake souvenirs — all create a family-friendly festival feel.

“We are thrilled to return to our original roots when this Festival was first born in 1995 and billed as “art on the lawn” by Southern Living magazine. Twenty years later we are proud to offer a world-class cultural art event that truly is a celebration of art, music, food and fun,” said Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation CEO Marcia Hull.

A Celebration of the Arts

The 21st annual edition of the Festival brings fresh art and new faces to the sugar-sand beaches of the Emerald Coast. This year, 31 new artists will participate in displaying everything from oil paintings and fine photography to mixed media, mosaics, sculpture, clay ceramics, jewelry and more. After two decades, this Festival has become a popular and proven showcase for some of the best artistic talent nationwide who venture to Northwest Florida to compete for \$10,000 in cash prizes.

Jerry R. Johnson, Professor of Art and Design at Troy University, Troy, Alabama and Nancy Raia, Community Outreach Director of the Eastern Shore Art in Fairhope, Ala., will award artist prizes in the juried and collaborative art categories. On Saturday, Festivalgoers are invited to vote for the “People's Choice” Artist Award by casting a ballot located at the Main Festival Entrance.

One of the unique features of the Festival is the Collaborative Art Exhibit, which showcases the work of more than two dozen seasoned and emerging adult artists and 60 local student artists competing for the \$600 McIlroy Awards given in honor of the late Patricia McIlroy, Destin's first First Lady and an MKAF advocate and patron.

Plein air is a French expression made popular in the late 1800s meaning “in the open air” used to describe the act of painting out of doors. Several local plein air painters will add to the Festival atmosphere by taking advantage of each day's natural light to capture the scenic views surrounding the Cultural Arts Village and still life vignettes on canvas.

The Festival provides opportunities for all ages to interact and immerse themselves in the vibrant art scene. A team of volunteers in the Kid's ArtStop Tent will work with young aspiring artists to create

hands-on interactive art activities, pumpkin paintings, face painting, mask painting and other fun fall crafts, not-to-mention adding their individual flair to a large group mural on canvas.

A Celebration of Music

Six local and regional musicians and bands will perform live throughout the weekend on stage at The Dugas Pavilion. Saturday singer/songwriter Drew Tillman (9:30-11:30 a.m.) serves up a taste of bluesy rock and roll followed by Roman Street (noon to 2 p.m.) — an internationally trained instrumental band specializing in improvisational fusion of Classical, Gypsy and Contemporary Jazz, Latin and Nuevo Flamenco performed by brothers Noah and Josh Thompson, then traditional jazz and modern soulful blues by Cartoon (2:30-4:30 p.m.) On Sunday, Noodle Soup (10-11 a.m.) opens the Festival with an eclectic blend of light jazz and folk with a Celtic vibe, followed by Jeff Glickman and the Panhandle All Stars (11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.) a six-member ensemble with a lyrical, slice-of-life bluesy-rock sound. Singer/songwriter Dino Lourdi, blues/smooth & classic jazz/fusion/funk/pop/rock (2-3:30 p.m.) closes out the Festival treating Festivalgoers to a performance infused with the Delta blues.

The Art of Dining

The Festival has expanded its culinary arts experience, too. Cuisine on the Green will serve up samplings of savory seafood from 790 On The Gulf, street tacos from The Big Red Truck, delicious barbecue from Jim N' Nicks, Asian Caribbean fusion from Coastal Chow along with sweet treats, snacks and lemonade from Rosey's Sweets & Treats, Mark's Hawaiian Shaved Ice & Funnel Cakes among others. Foodies can toast the arts with select domestic and imported wine and beer in the newly expanded Wine Bar & Beer Garden. Gather with family and friends to enjoy your meal al fresco, while taking in the Festival scene and listening to the stellar music line up.

More Festival Amenities

Buy Festival Merchandise — This year's official Festival guide, poster and t-shirt feature the coastal-inspired artwork of Destin, Florida, folk artist Kathleen Broaderick, who will be exhibiting at the Festival. Signed and numbered poster prints and souvenir t-shirts will be available for sale in the Souvenir Tent.

Win Art! — Be sure to also visit the Art Drawing Tent and enter the charity benefit drawing for chances to win a range of original artwork generously donated by the 2016 Festival artists, including

an oil painting (valued at \$2,275) by guest artist and Florida Highwayman A.J. Brown. The drawing will take place on Sunday, Oct. 30 at 3 p.m., but you do not need to be present to win.

Get the Guide —A free Festival Guide containing a roster of all artists, a map of the Festival site, the entertainment line up, a list of food & beverage vendors and other helpful hints on how to navigate through the Festival is available at the entrance.

Free Parking/Shuttle — Park for free at Grace Lutheran Church located adjacent to the Cultural Arts Village or at Emerald Coast Centre, located on Highway 98 near Beall's Department Store, and ride the free continuous shuttle service right to the main entrance. The Cultural Arts Village is designed as an ADA compliant venue with available handicap parking.

Convenient Art Pick Up — Purchasers of large artwork or multiple pieces can obtain an "art pickup" pass from the Festival Main Entry Tent. For Festival fans using the art shuttle, simply return to the satellite parking at Emerald Coast Shopping Centre to retrieve your vehicle and display your pass on your dashboard to gain access to the Festival entrance.

Get Involved — The Festival is sponsored, in part, by more than 30 local businesses and media partners, and is produced with the help of a team of more than 100 dedicated volunteers. Volunteer shifts are available by contacting Volunteer Coordinator Kathy Whidden at (850) 376-7391 or kathy@destinchiropactor.com.

The Festival is open to the public and runs Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Daily admission is \$5. Proceeds from the event benefit MKAF and its arts education outreach programs for all. The event is free to children 12 and under and MKAF members. Sorry, no refunds are given for inclement weather. For more information, visit mattiekellyartsfoundation.org call (850) 650-2226 and follow us on Facebook.

PHOTOGRAPHY: For representative photos, logos and promo materials for MKAF Festival of the Arts [click here](#).

ABOUT MATTIE KELLY ARTS FOUNDATION

Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF), a 501-c-3 not-for-profit charitable arts organization, was founded in 1995 on the cultural, educational and spiritual beliefs of the late Destin matriarch, Mattie Kelly. MKAF's mission is Northwest Florida's champion of cultural arts and arts education for all.

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