

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Carolina Plein Air Art Festival in Historic New Bern – Beaufort – Oriental

May 11–17, 2026

Mark your calendar and plan early

NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA – The 6th Annual North Carolina Plein Air Art Festival in historic New Bern begins Sunday, May 11, and continues through Sunday, May 17, 2026. This eight-day Festival showcases nationally and globally acclaimed plein air artists, including newly juried painters alongside returning award winners and top performers from previous Festivals.

“The term ‘plein air’ is French and means ‘open air’,” said Kippy Hammond, Festival organizer. “Plein air painting can be traced back to Impressionist artists such as Monet, Renoir, and Degas – painting outdoors and capturing fleeting moments of light, color, atmosphere, and the mood of a scene, rather than detailed representations.”

Painting venues include historic New Bern, the first state capital and second-oldest European-American town in North Carolina; Beaufort, the home of the North Carolina Maritime Museum; and Oriental, the sailing capital of North Carolina. In addition, artists will choose more sites and landscapes in Craven, Carteret, and Pamlico Counties.

According to Hammond, artists will create approximately 400 paintings featuring local scenes, subjects, and vistas, in a friendly competition to win the Best of Show Koffenberger Award, plus other prominent awards and recognition.

Festival attendees will have numerous opportunities to meet and talk with the artists, including using a real-time cell phone app showing the locations of featured painters each day. In addition, youth and adult amateur artists can meet with the pros and compete for ribbons and cash awards in the annual Quick Paint competition.

Festival headquarters, including demonstrations, daily gallery talks, adult and youth workshops, art displays, and sales, will be based in historic New Bern’s Farmers Market, less than two blocks from Tryon Palace. In addition, pop-up exhibits and art sales will happen in Beaufort and Oriental, with location details, dates, and times on the NC Plein Air website. All activities are free except the workshops, and a modest fee for artists to enter the Quick Paint competition (no charge for spectators).

Workshops include award-winning plein air artists conducting sessions across the United States and Europe. Both are renowned American Impressionist painters and in-demand instructors.

“Plein air is a popular form of art and recreational activity influenced by the rise in global tourism,” said Hammond. “Artists are interested in capturing the essence of a particular place and time and celebrating the world’s beauty. Plein air painters typically work in oils, watercolors, or pastels.”

NC Plein Air Art Festival is owned and operated by Plein Air New Bern, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization expanding opportunities for individuals to Be a Part of Art in their communities. Artists commit a portion of all Festival art sales to support this mission.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Kippy Hammond, Director

Annalee Ash, Community Liaison

NC Plein Air Art Festival New Bern

info.ncpleinair@gmail.com

858-205-5979 & 202-412-9499