



## The AOK Wellfleet Artist Retreat

In June, 2019 AOK expanded our programming to launch a new Artist Residency program in Wellfleet, MA for young, emerging artists.

The AOK Wellfleet Artist Retreat builds on the success of our ongoing programming in the Washington, D.C. area, which is designed to increase equity and level the playing field for the young, emerging artists we serve. It adds to the richness of community and opportunity that AOK already provides and offers an additional layer of special experience for our young, emerging artists.

**Why an Artist Residency Center?** Over the last two decades, the United States has seen a boon in artist residencies, but none offer what we seek to provide: a year-round program committed to increasing equity and opportunity for young, emerging artists.

There are plenty of residency programs for established artists—Yaddo and MacDowell are the cream of that crop. Artist residencies for the young, emerging artists we serve are exceedingly rare. And yet, such a resource could be pivotal for a young artist's development, not only as a creative person but as a young adult and budding citizen. The Wellfleet Artist Retreat fills this gap and furthers our commitment to providing transformative experiences that increase equity and opportunity for our young artists.

All artists in our program benefit from the same perks offered by the most prestigious residencies in the country: A quiet, private work space, comfortable lodging, delicious, healthy home-cooked meals and a work environment that fosters creativity and community.

At the Wellfleet Artist Retreat, we provide a safe space for all artists. It is located near the ocean, in the scenic Cape Cod town of Wellfleet, which has long been a haven for artists. During their stay, artists are able to surrender to their work, free of the external stressors that define daily life. They can work in complete freedom, take care of themselves, connect with other artists and deepen their craft.

**Where do the residencies happen and when?** Our ultimate goal is to have a fully-functioning, permanent home for the Wellfleet Artist Retreat that can house up to 10-12 artists at a time.

But we're not waiting until then to bring our young artists to Wellfleet. Starting in the summer of 2019, we have already started hosting artists-in-residence in Wellfleet at the home of AOK founders Kathy Fletcher and David Simpson.

In the summer of 2019 we hosted 2 young artists for our inaugural residencies. Bella completed a three week residency during which she created a powerful fiber-art installation. Tatiana is a talented actor who completed a three month residency in which she performed in the Provincetown Theater's 8-week summer production of Sweeney Todd, in addition to doing an internship at the Theater. (Click [here](#) to see Tati talk about her residency.) In December, 2019 we hosted 2 more young artists (a poet and a painter) and in 2020 we will host at least 15 young artists.

**What happens during the Wellfleet residencies?** Most importantly, AOK artists-in-residence have uninterrupted time and space to create. We invite them to leave the worries, uncertainties, demands, anxieties and self-doubt of everyday life behind them for the duration of their residency. They are invited to reflect, to dream, to imagine and to really sink into their art in quiet seclusion. They are provided with everything they need—food, time, supplies, space, solitude, quiet—and have nothing to worry about except being artists and making art. As artists-in-residence, they receive very special treatment, and are invited to think of themselves as deserving of this, simply because they are artists.

And when the sun goes down, they are invited to a big table, where they share delicious food and conversation with their fellow residents, which frequently include a small number of more established artists and special guest visiting artists. They have the opportunity to share their experiences with one another, ask questions, share and glean new wisdom. They have the all-too-rare experience of participating in a community of self-identified artists, moored in in the values of creativity, solidarity, respect, reflection, kindness, hard work, humor, trust and of high self-regard.

**Who gets to do Wellfleet residencies?** Initially, our focus is on recruiting emerging DC-area emerging artists from 18-25 years old who would most benefit from our commitment to increasing equity and opportunity. To find our artists-in-residence, we use the extensive connections with the vibrant DC-area young artistic community we've developed through our existing programs. As our program grows and matures in the next 2-5 years, we will expand our geographical reach by recruiting young artists from around the nation.

Artists-in-residence are chosen in a competitive application process by a selection committee assembled by AOK composed of current AOK artists, staff and outside experts. The panel will change every year to ensure vibrancy of selection. Artists are selected based on the quality of and commitment to their work and their project description.

**How much do residencies cost?** Wellfleet residencies are offered at no cost. AOK offers our artists-in-residence a weekly stipend. Travel expenses are paid and full room and board provided. AOK also provides basic supplies.

Here are more details about how the Wellfleet Artist Retreat works:

- Residencies last from one week to two months and take place year round.
- They are open to artists of all disciplines, including visual arts, writing (fiction, nonfiction, drama, poetry, etc.), spoken word, architecture, musical composition and performance, theater, dance, culinary arts and interdisciplinary arts.
- Through social interaction at meal times and during free time artists-in-residence have the opportunity to benefit and learn from each other's experiences and insights.
- Work and living spaces are a mix of private and shared spaces.
- Well-stocked pantries and fridges are available to artists to make their own breakfast and lunch.
- Dinner is prepared and served family-style every night.
- All artists manage their own time, apart from supper time.
- We facilitate regular workshops focusing on various aspects of being an artist, including the business side of art and exploring the practical challenges of making a living in the creative economy. Topics include financial literacy for artists, grant-writing, social marketing, website design, how to gain artist representation, how to price one's work, etc.
- Artists are invited to participate in voluntary trips to visit galleries, attend performances and other cultural activities, as well as other organized activities like whale watches and going to the beach.
- Artists have opportunities to connect with the local community, including making school visits, offering public presentations, open rehearsals and local classes and participating in community dinners.
- Artists are invited to share their work with each other and with the public during and at the end of their residency.
- Artists are invited to share their work for presentation on AOK's website.
- Artists are invited to become part of an alumnus community, with the ability to communicate with each other through social media platforms and periodic gatherings.

**How you can help.** We are very excited about this next stage of AOK's growth, which builds on our track record of providing young, emerging artists from with the opportunities, skills and networks they need to be happy and successful, both as creative individuals and as young adults. It is thanks to you that we are able to take this exciting step as an organization. We are grateful for your belief in our artists and your support of AOK.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more, or if you are interested in making a tax-deductible donation to AOK, please contact David at [david@aokdc.org](mailto:david@aokdc.org) or 413.658.5406, or visit [www.aokarts.org/donate](http://www.aokarts.org/donate).