

“ASHLEY’S TABLE”



2024 has been one more successful, exciting year for the Ashley Bryan Center. Most importantly, construction was completed and the expanded Storyteller Pavilion was opened to the public on July 1. It continues as a meditative space, but now we are able to display more of Ashley’s artwork and reminders of what made this man so special. The new room has been named “Ashley’s Table”.

Soon after Ashley’s passing, as we discussed changes to the Pavilion, our Board was unanimous that it wasn’t a recreation of one of his studios that was needed. Everywhere, indoors and out was a creative space for him; everyone he met was an inspiration. The answer is a replica of the dining room in Ashley’s house – furniture and cabinets, toys, paintings, books, even the bowl of jellies on the table. Visitors love it. People who knew him either cry or laugh when they first see it. And then they sit in his seat and share experiences they had with Ashley around the fabled table.

The new room has significant space for art and programs. Work hung last summer included one of Ashley’s earliest flower paintings (early 50s), two of an exiled Pablo Casals performing in the Pyrenees soon after World War II, and collages from Ashley’s book “Blooming Beneath the Sun”. It is with much appreciation that we thank architect Jeri Spurling, curator Dru Colbert, and contractors Jason Pickering and Paul Fernald.



Ashley at home, 2019



Thom Heyer & Aaron Greene in the Pavilion, 2024



Giveaway Day, 2024

With expansion, we can also offer programs and classes drawing on Ashley’s philosophy. Board member Thom Heyer moderated a series of “Conversations at Ashley’s Table”. The first involved learning about creating musical instruments with luthier Aaron Green – an attendee pointed out that Ralph Stanley, famed local boat builder, used similar techniques to make violins! The second Conversation was with Nate Shaw discussing his approach to teaching and composing music. Nate is a co-founder of the Brooklyn Music Factory and a new summer resident of the island. He led the assembled group through the elements of composition, ending with his performance of our newly created piece. The third Conversation of the summer featured Christina Spurling, daughter of Islesford, collaborative pianist at Colby College and a musical director, joined by her colleague, clarinetist Eric Thomas. They shared their musical gifts through Eric’s moving composition “Threnody: for Ann Arsenault”. These were a huge success!

“wake up
every morning
and find the
child in you”

Ashley's house was filled with thousands of books, toys, and memorabilia and the ABC inherited all of it. We had three “giveaway events” at his house this summer sharing something of Ashley's with huge numbers of his “family”, children and adults. In addition, 63 boxes of children's books were added to the Ashley Bryan archive at University of Pennsylvania; fifteen boxes will be displayed at College of the Atlantic; another fifteen were given to Jan Coates for distribution through Island Readers and Writers.

We will continue the “Conversations” and hope to be having classes for both adults and children.

The Pavilion is available for small events and we will collaborate with the Islesford Neighborhood House for larger ones. At the end of last summer, Amy Hausmann, new Executive Director of the Maine Arts Commission, visited on the island. She loved the Pavilion and felt that it did the job perfectly displaying Ashley's work and presenting the story of a very important man.

Thank you for your continued support. Ashley would be so pleased that we are honoring his passion for creativity in all forms of expression. Please come and sit, read, listen, sketch, enjoy some jellies. And remember the advice he gave all of us – “wake up every morning and find the child in you”.

Your continued support will be welcomed.



Dan Lief



One of four prints acquired by The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC



New display space

Breaking News:

Director Nick Clark has guided 4 of Ashley's original signed prints into the collection of the National Gallery in Washington. Two are from Walk Together Children and two were included in I'm Going to Sing.



Casals and Orchestra, Prades, 1952. Newly restored by Peter Rudolph



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