



Alabama's international artist

BY LENORE VICKREY,
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Few Alabamians are known by only one name, but very few can command the international reputation of the artist Nall. Born Fred Nall Hollis in Troy in 1948, he has been creating art in a variety of genres for more than 50 years, from paintings, mosaics, and line engravings to sculpture, glassware, and jewelry. He grew up in Troy and earned a degree in art, political science, and abnormal psychology from the University of Alabama. He studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and was mentored by Salvador Dali. His work has been exhibited in France, Italy, Switzerland, New York, Miami, and many other museums, and he has been an artist in residence at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Miami-Dade College, and Troy University. After living several years in France and setting up his N.A.L.L. Art Foundation for students, he returned to Alabama, where he now operates out of his studio in Fairhope. He has a permanent art gallery in the International Arts Center on the Troy campus.

Your work is well known to many Alabamians who've seen it in the hotels and properties of the Retirement Systems of Alabama.

Do you still supply new artwork to the RSA hotels and buildings?

Working with the RSA has been a great part of my career. It gives you a lot of exposure. People go to luxury hotels much more than they go to museums. I met Dr. David G. Bronner (CEO of the Retirement Systems of Alabama) through (Troy University Chancellor) Jack and Janice Hawkins. It's all like a family. They're wonderful, super people. I did all the pieces at the Grand Hotel, and loaned them in 2002 when they did a major renovation. Having completed a massive transformation in 2018, they gave back 1,500 pieces of my art. So now, when I go to someone's home, I take a little piece of art instead of a bottle of wine. Everybody won! For the Grand's transformation, the resort added a Nall Suite and a connecting gallery overlooking the historic main lobby. I also created large camellia prints for the reception desk wall. Other new pieces are in guest rooms and other locations throughout the resort.

At your studio in Fairhope, do you still work with apprentices?

I'm still working with them, using a lot of students from the high school mostly. Every now and then, I'll get one who wants to apprentice for three or four months. That's what I'm looking for. They're helping me, and that is learning (for them) because they're in a professional environment. We paint and frame, learn about inventories, giving interviews with the press, how to make yourself available. I'm teaching them everything I know about everything. How to be a teacher is taught in school. How to be an artist is not. There's a world of difference.

Frames have been an important part of your signature look.

Absolutely. It's the framework on the pieces that really makes some of them. Whatever you see, you see the framework with it. So, if you put an 18th-century gilded frame around a drawing, the drawings are going to look a heck of a lot better. And if you put a drawing or little painting with tacky little frames, you wouldn't want it. It's an important thing I try to teach my kids. What you're giving the public is an image.

The image is inseparable from the frame around it. If you want to have a filthy house with the bed unmade and the curtains ragged and falling down, the house might be great, but people who are going into the house will say, "This is awful." It's the same thing with a painting or somebody's clothes.

What are your current projects?

I've got three books going on. The N.A.L.L. Foundation is going to publish my memoirs. Plus, I'm building a museum down here in Fairhope. I've been told by a spiritual advisor that if you write your memoirs, it's the best way to increase your memory. If I'd known that, I'd have started them 10 years ago. ■

“The image is inseparable from the frame around it.”

Gallery open to the public at:

414 Equality Street, Fairhope, AL 36532.
For more information visit artistnall.com.

ARTISTS FEATURED IN THE RTJ RESORT COLLECTION

Judith Amanda, Jennifer Antoline, Margaret Barber, Ann Mottershead Betak, Sloane Bibb, Sue Blackshear, Xander Booker, Julia Bradshaw, Neal Brantley, Kyle Braund, Edward Brummal, Chip Cooper, Nan Cunningham, J J Gaudel, Sybil Gibson, Sarita Gish, Russell Goodloe, Nancy Goodman, Erin Fitzhugh Gregory, Jim Gunter, Anton Haardt, Amber Hall, Mike Handley, Baba Hendricks, Marty Hoerr, Stacey Howell, Carrie Johnson, Robert Harold Johnston III, Robert

Johnston, Ryan Clifford Keller, Mary Riser Kennedy, Christy Rhodes Kirk, Bruce Larsen, Charlie Lucas, Michael Mastro, Betty Sue Matthews, Jim Morris, Maya Morland, Christopher Moses, Haardt Moses, Melanie H O'Keefe, Herbert "Mannie" Pair, Heather Pettersen, Donna Pickens, Tigo Price, Barbara Reed, Bradley Robertson, Natalyn Havenick Rose, Conrad and Janice Ross, Jayne Rushin, Stephen Savage, Kate Seawell, Michael Simpson, David M. Spears, Joan White-Spinner, Susan Starr, Steve Strickland,

George Taylor, Les Thompson, Langley Tolbert, Annie Tolliver, Lynda Smith Touart, Melissa Tubbs, Mary Catherine Watson, Susan Downing White, Dave Willmart, Devlin Wilson, and Robert Zimmerman.

Artists Paul Looney, Ann Morland, Kate Seawell, Jimmy Lee Sudduth, and Yvonne Wells also have works on consignment in the Renaissance Montgomery.

Deceased artists in permanent collection include: Steve Skidmore, Jimmy Lee Sudduth, Mose T, and Flemming Tyler Wilson.