

Studio in Woods: crossing boundaries

January 06, 2015 11:00 AM

Carol J. Schlueter cjs@tulane.edu



Joe and Lucianne Carmichael, founders of A Studio in the Woods, enjoy the 2013 dedication of the new "Stewards" Cottage on the studio's grounds in Algiers, Louisiana. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

[A Studio in the Woods](#) is just an 18-mile drive from the Tulane University uptown campus, but it's a world away in a hardwood forest at the edge of Orleans Parish. The secluded retreat center is a unique and vital part of the Tulane family.

Ten years ago, the studio's founders, Joe and Lucianne Carmichael, [donated](#) their seven-plus acres of forest and its buildings to Tulane.

The Carmichaels "really wanted the project to last in perpetuity," said Ama Rogan, the studio's managing director.

"Our intention for these residencies is for artists and scholars to collaborate, creating something they wouldn't otherwise be able to create."

Ama Rogan, managing director, A Studio in the Woods

Tulane University

It's a good partnership, said Lucianne Carmichael. "We trusted Tulane with this gift and the past 10 years have made it very clear to us that Tulane University is a good home for both the forest and the program."

One of the first live-in artists' retreats in the Deep South, the award-winning studio fits well in the interdisciplinary focus envisioned by Tulane President Michael Fitts.

For example, this spring's five-week residencies, called "[Flint and Steel](#)," pair artists and Tulane faculty members on projects.

Among the partnerships are Tulane biologists Jordan Karubian and Renata Durães Ribeiro, whose research is on the effects of lead in the environment on [mockingbirds](#). They will work with visual artist Jessica Levine to develop pop-up educational displays about their research for parks, festivals and schools.

The environmental focus reflects both the studio's mission and its position within the [Tulane/Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research](#).

Michael Blum, CBR director, wants to broaden the studio's programs by bridging the sciences with complementary disciplines, using the arts to communicate research to the community.

"I see the studio as a fabulous asset for us to reach our constituencies," Blum said.

In addition, Rogan said, "We just wrapped up a fall semester of scholarly residencies, which have been well received by the seven different faculty and postdoctoral students spending retreat time out here."

Tulane alumna Jan Gilbert, a founding board member of the studio, describes it as "the perfect universe to incubate network building, multidisciplinary collaboration, deep thought, regeneration and innovation."



These gates lead to A Studio in the Woods, across from the Mississippi River levee in Algiers, Louisiana. The forested retreat is about 18 miles from the Tulane University uptown campus.