

Island Visitor's SIESTA * SAND

Arts on the Horizon

ebstein | April 1, 2018
By Rodger Skidmore

Spend a day on an island



I like me but I'm glad everyone isn't like me.



quote by: **Juliette Martin**, St. Petersburg, Florida

February and March provided us with many cold days this year. Perhaps Mother Nature was just showing us, in her fun way, how lucky we are to be in Sarasota. Lucky because it sure was cold, snowy and blowy up north where they have cold, snowy weather with high winds for much longer than we do here.

So, where to go, Iceland? If you translate “Iceland” into any Scandinavian language, it means island, which is what it is. But no, too cold this time (any time) of year. How about Hong Kong? No, way too expensive. That leaves only Island Park (which is actually on a peninsula, but who’s counting) here in Sarasota. Yes, from April 4th until the 1st of June, Island Park (also known as

Bayfront Park) is the place to go. And also to stay for a few hours, as there will be 45 large billboards placed there for Sarasota's 15th Embracing Our Differences exhibition. This year's theme is "Enriching lives through diversity and inclusion."

Enriching? Well last year 212,000 visitors walked around the park viewing the really large mural like billboards. Those people certainly felt enriched. Diversity? This year's 8,325 entireties of paintings and inspirational thoughts come from as far away as the Ukraine, Bangladesh and 96 other countries. Inclusion? Submissions came from children in Russia, the Philippines, Iran, the Netherlands and all around the world. Each painting / collage / drawing / etc. on the billboards is paired with a quote filled with meaning, love, and hope. While some of the paintings and quotes are from other countries most are from elementary school students in our area – from St. Pete down to Northport, with the majority coming from students right here in Sarasota. Pictured, is the digital painting "Together" by Bente Schoone of the Netherlands, which is paired with a lovely quote by Juliette Martin of St. Petersburg (the one in Florida).

The setting for this exhibition is quite special, especially this time of year. There should be spring breezes, summery blue sky and pleasant temperatures as you traverse the undulating hillocks that contain the paintings – all surrounded by water. On the Island there are sitting benches, swinging benches, a children's playground with fountain, and at the tip of the island, the dolphin fountain with the Ringling bridge as its backdrop. And, should you get hungry, there is O'Leays Tiki Bar and Grill, just a few steps away from the water on the south side of the island.