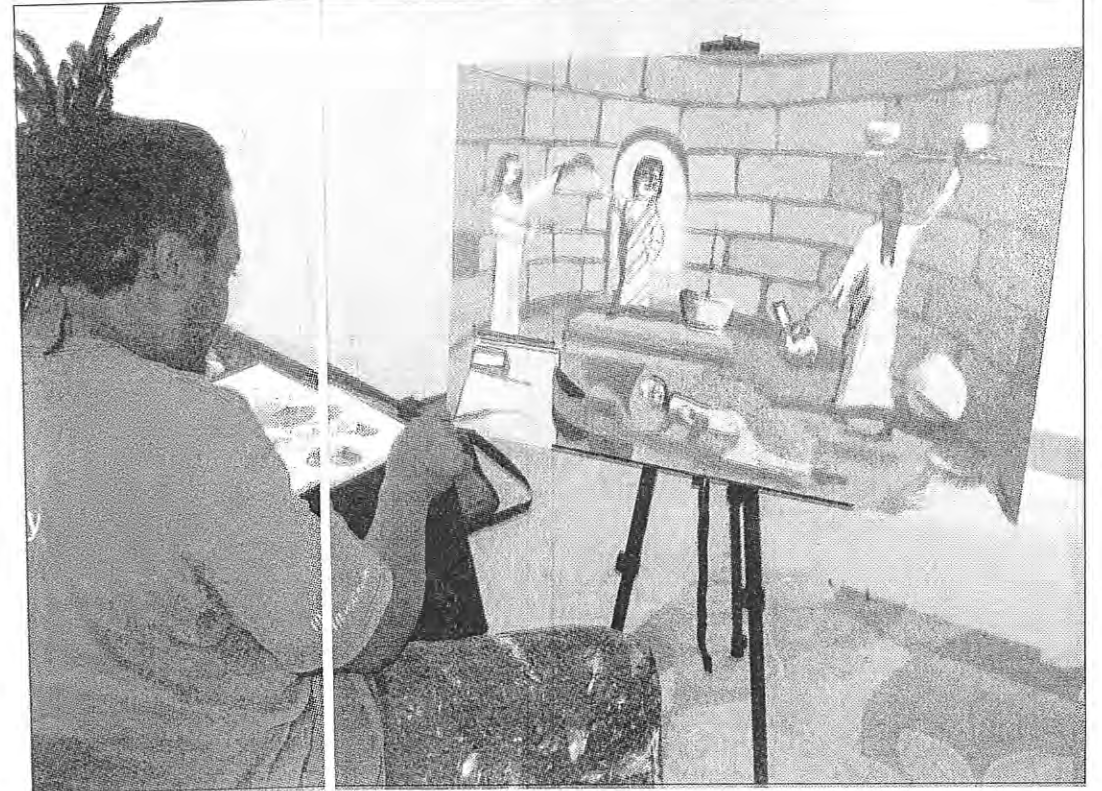




Gordon deep in thought



Artist Gordon

Artists blossom at the Gallery

PHOTOS: MONA LISA TATUM WATLER AND LINDSEY TURNBULL



Unity

The original talents of three of Cayman's most well-known artists were on display at the National Gallery just recently, as Gordon Solomon, Avril Ward and Renate Seffer completed a two-week residency, filling the Gallery with their energy and vibrancy as well as their artistic endeavours. Business Editor Lindsey Turnbull went along to see how the artists adapted their new environment to suit their creativity and reports. First in a two-part series.

In June the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands became a huge blank canvas for three artists, each well known for their own inimitable artistic style, during an artist residency programme that is now in its third year at the Gallery.

Each artist was invited to take up their own individual space and create their artwork right in front of the eyes of visitors. The two week event culminated with a special exhibition of their works which will run until 25 August.

Upon reflection

Gordon Solomon is a reflective painter whose work is often guided by his spirituality and his appreciation of the Bible. The Kingdom of Heaven has been an ongoing body of work for the artist and he continues his theme during his residency at the Gallery.

Sketches and developing oil paintings sit around the artist at his new "studio" as he works intently on a particular painting "The Lost Coin".

"My work evolves over time," he confirms. "Sometimes I might draw an idea and it will sit with me for a year or two before I attempt to create the actual painting."

A sketch for this particular work sits alongside Gordon but his actual painting has developed further along, with additional characters and symbols rounding out the painting, which is an ode to the parable of the lost coins, a metaphor Gordon says, for lost souls.

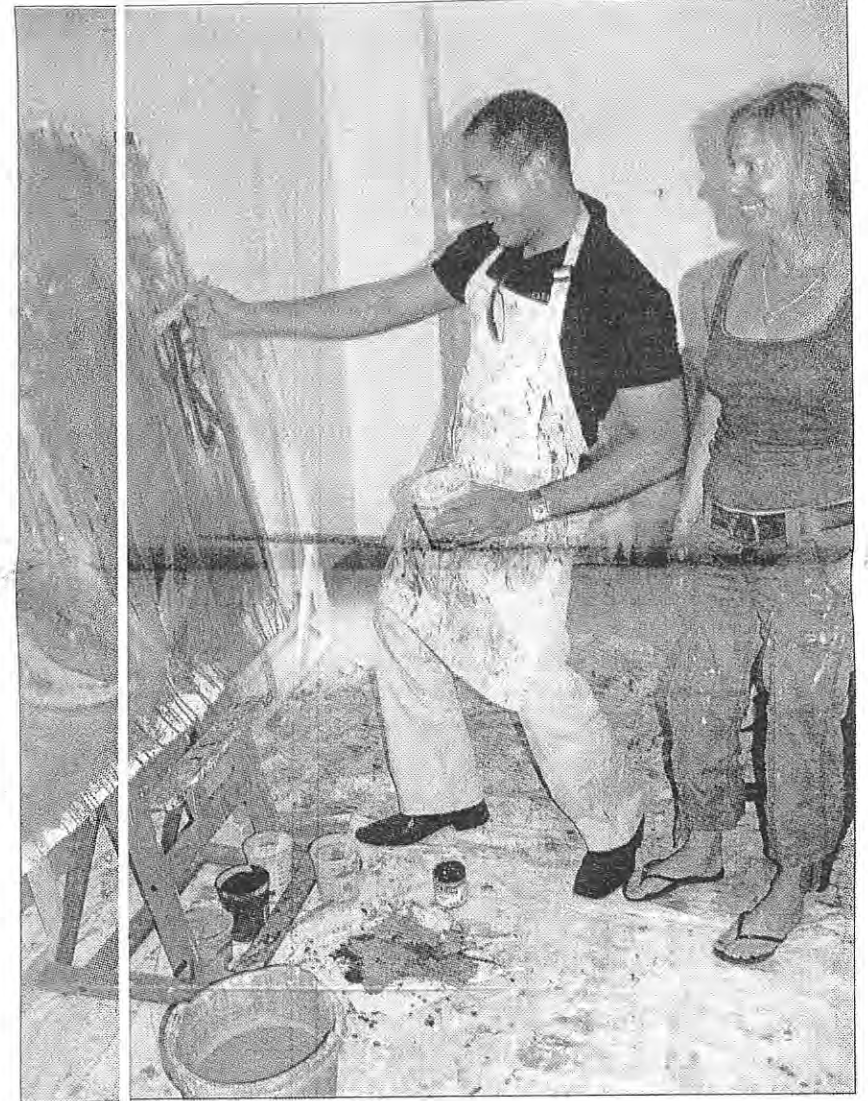
To date, just day two of the residency, Gordon says there has been a great deal of interest from passing visitors, mainly tourists from the cruise ships.

"They have been really interested in our work," he confirms. "They have also had a great deal of questions about Cayman as a whole so it has been great to interact with them and tell them a bit about the islands."

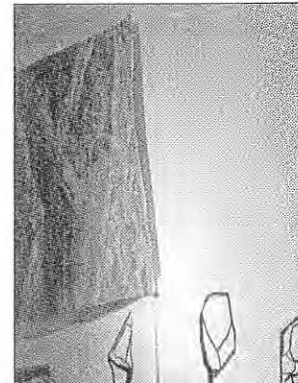
Exploration of talent

When I visit Renate Seffer she is assisting a visitor, Andrew Daley, with his artistic creation, a huge canvas covered in broad brush strokes that Renate has assembled so that visitors can properly interact with her as an artist.

"I think people are often a little intimidated by picking up a paint brush so it has been great to help people let loose on the canvas and create whatever they want on



Artists Renate with guest





Avril's sculpture



Avril's first bronze



Avril's work

the canvas," Renate explains. "It's great to watch their artistic expression unfold."

Central to her work during her residency is Renate's own personal exploration of her artistic journey. The exhibition is entitled Wanderlust and it's a baseline from which she has worked since a trip to New York galvanised her into artistic action after a quiet period artistically of what she terms "painter's block".

The walls around her are filled with sketches and paintings of ethereal fluid figures, observations of frenetic New York life.

"The pieces that I'm creating are

Avril Ward says she has created a "home away from home" at the Gallery, bringing with her all the tools of her trade – picks, brushes, jam jars, clay, and a whole host of other sculpting tools, to create her now trademark figures. She highlights her very first piece created during the first two days of her residency. Entitled Nick Nack Paddy Wack, it is a delightful study of man and his dog.

Avril is also delighted that her first sculpture has been cast in bronze. Entitled Joy Unspeakable it's a light hearted study of a man who is leaping for joy.

"It's a real thrill for me," she con-

"I like to work on a number of things in one go," she confirms. "The paintings are my 'instant art messages', the artistic equivalent of text messages or BBMs."

As a whole the paintings, of which there are 16, are a stunningly beautiful collection of her talents; individually they each make an impression with their colour and vibrancy.

Avril intends to paint simple but poignant words on the paintings and allow people to photograph them and then send them to loved ones and friends.

"The pink rose painting lends itself to the work 'love' while I'll be

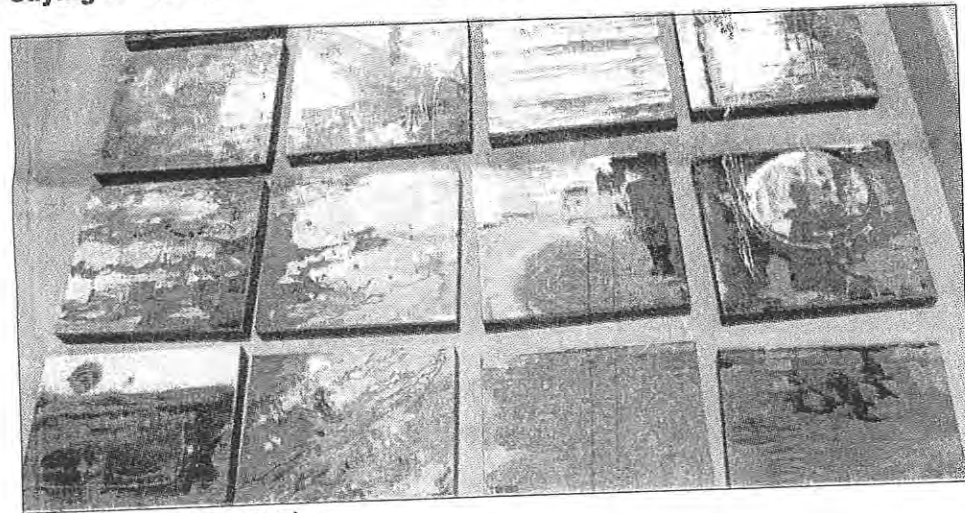


terms painter's block.

The walls around her are filled with sketches and paintings of ethereal fluid figures, observations of frenetic New York life.

"The pieces that I'm creating are all about colour, movement and the abstract," she confirms, which is not a massive leap but more an interesting maturing from her whimsical, colourful figures that have been the trademark of her work to date.

Saying it with art



Artists blossom Avril's work



Avril in action

Avril is also delighted that her first sculpture has been cast in bronze. Entitled Joy Unspeakable it's a light hearted study of a man who is leaping for joy.

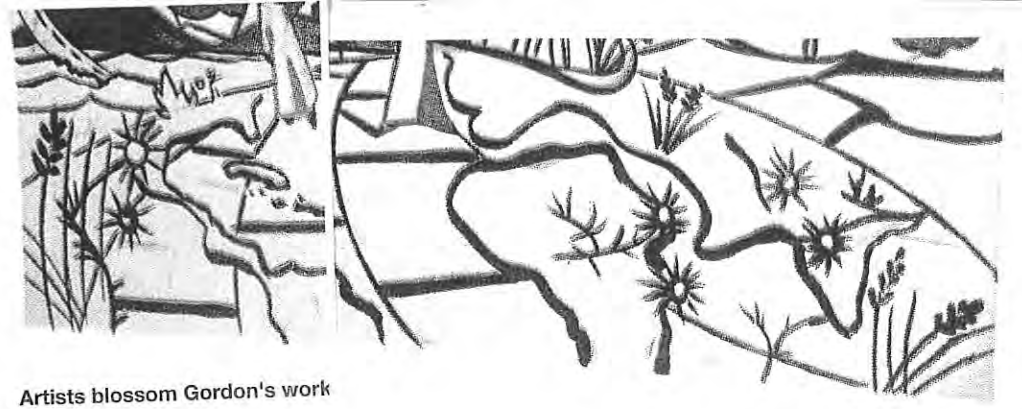
"It's a real thrill for me," she confirms. "It's a one-off original and I'm really pleased with it."

A series of highly colourful and enigmatic paintings are carefully laid out in sequence on the floor in another part of her working space and Avril flits from the sculpting work to these paintings like a butterfly.

Avril's work on the paintings will allow people to photograph them and then send them to loved ones and friends.

"The pink rose painting lends itself to the work 'love' while I'll be working other emotions and feelings into the other paintings," she confirms. "I think it's great to be able to say it with art as well as with words."

Don't miss next month's Journal for a look at the artists' final exhibitions.



Artists blossom Gordon's work

