‘Expanding my understanding’

Bruce Museum’s artist-in-residence program a ‘homecoming’ for Kimberly Klauss

By Bekah Wright

For Kimberly Klauss, the newly named Bruce Museum’s artist-in-residence for November is a homecoming. “I grew up in Stamford, so it’s a return home,” said the artist who had been living in Munich, Germany. Familial responsibilities had seen Klauss visiting Connecticut more frequently. “I’ve been coming back for longer periods of time and was looking for a way to make my art and be here.”

About that time, the Bruce’s artistic staff began to hit her notes. She hastily applied, and she had been chosen, nine days later, boarded a plane for Greenwich. She began her nine-month residency, which is supported by the Greenwich Arts Council in New Canaan.

A release from the museum states, “Klauss was selected for her innovative approach to painting and her demonstrated commitment to combining art and science within her artistic practice.” The statement is a hat tip to her design and mechanical engineering background. In Munich, her time was divided between working on art in her studio and teaching engineering students design, information visualization and color theory. She sees crossovers in the methodologies of art and engineering.

“You start with an open question and are trying to get to something you can’t, that doesn’t exist yet,” she said. “There’s a lot of science in her artistic process, too.” The way she uses the oil paint is a little trick of alchemy,” she said. “Ideal with oil paint is put on additively with layers building up. Ideal with painting through a lot of erasing and taking away.”

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“I’m so moved by this recognition,” Zuraitis said during the acceptance speech. “I’m so moved by this recognition,” Zuraitis said during the acceptance speech. “This, truly, because I’m a worker. I don’t think it’s sunk in yet, but it’s so exciting.”

Almost two weeks later, Zuraitis still can’t believe that she took home a Grammy. “I don’t think it’s sunk in yet, truly, because I’m a working musician,” Zuraitis said during a phone interview with the Press. “How Love Begins,” her sixth album as a leader, released last summer. The album was co-produced by Grammy-winning jazz bassist and composer Christian McBride, who worked on her album when she was younger, turned her onto the jazz tradition and into the musician she is today.

Vocalist Nicole Zuraitis in the press room with the Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album for “How Love Begins” during the 66th Annual Grammy Awards at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles on Feb. 4. Courtesy of Kimberly Klauss

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To give back to her local community, Zuraitis has undertaken a plethora of philanthropic work which includes hosting a benefit concert for Long Island Sound, advocating for mental health organizations and even rescuing dogs from kill shelters.

“My goal in life is to get to the point where I’m not making any contributions to those organizations, that I can actually make music that makes a bigger difference and also brings together communities,” Zuraitis said. “That’s always been a big part of my career. That’s why I took this job. It’s not just paying the bills. It’s not just making a living. It’s always been about giving back to my community.”

‘Feeling jazzed’

Connecticut’s Nicole Zuraitis talks first Grammy win, giving back to community

By Andrew Dolosa

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