

arts SHORTS

Don't Quit Your Day Job?

Playa Fellowship Residency offers safe haven for local artists

For an independent artist in this country, the options for honing one's craft are slim – go to art school or get a part-time job and gut it out in your off time. A graduate professor of writing once told me that the greatest single thing he did for his students was get them out of the economy for a few years, so that they could focus on work.

Though it's said that art cannot be made in a vacuum, the need to concentrate in the peace (or fury) of one's practice is definitely significant. This is precisely why programs such as the Playa Fellowship Residency exist.

Located on 35 acres in Summer Lake, Oregon, Playa is a nonprofit organization that supports literature, the arts and natural sciences. A central gathering building and six fully equipped cabins border the starkly majestic Summer Lake playa, which gives the program its name, providing a spectacularly beautiful and isolated environment for artists to work.

The residencies are for one to two months, consisting of seven to nine residents at a time. Residents stay in the site's fully furnished cabins, each of which possesses a stunning view of the area.

"The landscape is dramatic and gorgeous," says Eugene painter/photographer Sarah Grew.

Grew recently completed a Playa residency, an experience she says will continue to feed her creativity for months to come. "The strength of the landscape becomes present in your work, even if you're not a landscape painter or something like that," Grew says.

There is no cell phone reception and very limited internet access at Playa; the nearest town is about 12 miles away. All meals and food are provided on-site. Residents are pretty much cut off from their ordinary worlds – a circumstance that Grew says is quite wonderful.

"As an artist, your day job takes you away from your art and residency really allows you to dive into the deep water of your work," she says.

Aside from a few communally offered events, such as a yoga class that takes place once a week, residents are left to work on their own or collaborate with other residents. No fees are charged for the Playa Fellowship Residency, but a \$25 application for the residency is required. Visual artists, performing artists, natural scientists and writers are all encouraged to apply. –

Dante Zuñiga-West

For more information, go to www.playasummerlake.org/guidelines-residencies



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