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Archmere Alumna Hits Big Time Art Scene

Monique Rollins: A name to remember.

BY MARK NARDONE • PHOTO BY RON DUBICK



Monique Rollins laughs. "I'll have to wait my whole life to see it displayed as one piece."

Standing in the soaring atrium of the Hercules Building in downtown Wilmington, Rollins gazes toward the north entrance, where the painting "Boa Constrictor Landscape" hangs as two 6-by-15 foot panels. This is her art—vibrantly colored, energetic and, often, very, very big.

Considered one of the most exciting artists to watch by no less than former Delaware Art Museum director Danielle Rice, Rollins moves ever forward. From lessons taken as a grade schooler to formal study at Syracuse University to earning master's degrees in painting and art history at the esteemed Pratt Institute, Rollins, 34, continues to evolve her own language of color, form and movement. She has also compiled an impressive list of group and solo shows, ranging from Delaware to New York City to Jamaica to the great art city of Florence, Italy, where she has lived with her Italian husband for four years—the past eight months with their new son.

Yet, Rollins maintains close ties to Wilmington. She credits local supporters for helping to launch her career, a favor she is all too happy to return. When students from her alma mater, Archmere Academy, visited Florence recently, they were able to stay part of the time at her home. "Delaware is really special that way," Rollins says. "That kind of support is just awesome. And now we have access to art scenes in other countries. It's a very exciting time."

"Boa Constrictor" was made specifically for a show at The Grand Opera House in Wilmington five years ago. "I wanted the guests to feel surrounded by an art landscape," she says. Painted in her garage, the piece was so large, Rollins had to walk several yards away from the studio to check the progress of her work. Her current studio, a former factory in Florence, allows for easier painting on a large scale, which she does from 8:30 a.m. till the evening most days, "with occasional breaks for looking," at art online, in galleries, at museums and "in my son's pop-up books."

You can see her latest work, starting this month, at the renovated La Vita Nova restaurant at the University of Delaware. In typical style, the mosaic of glass tile is big—almost 6 feet high and over 14 feet long. "It's a real centerpiece," says architect Lou Rosenberg.