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MOVIES

'Artists at the Edge,' new short documentary is filming in Provincetown

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"Artists at the Edge," the latest documentary short from Provincetown resident Patrick Riviere, focuses on the lives of two Provincetown artists, Darlene Van Alstyne and Kenny Lockwood.

As a friend and admirer of Van Alstyne's and Lockwood's work, Riviere wanted to put the artists in the driver's seat, allowing them to be the sole narrators of their stories.

"Giving the opportunity to remarkable artists that people may not know about, they're not household names, but letting them tell their own stories and show their own art to a wider audience, that just really excites me," he said. "It's not their kids talking about them or their neighbors, they get to tell their story and show their art."

As a gay man and the brother of someone with Down Syndrome, Riviere tries to focus his work on "people in the other," or members of marginalized communities.

"There was a time when people and still the people that are considered disabled are considered other," he said. "People of color, other. Women, other. Seniors, others...I've often focused my work on the otherness, and so I wanted to...highlight artists that would be considered others by the mainstream and at a time when so many strides have been made...for people of color, the LGBTQ community, women and yet now there's a pushback against that equality."

Riviere plans to interweave Van Alstyne and Lockwood's stories in the short to highlight the similarities they share amid their myriad differences.

"Even though they're different types of artists, they're different ages, they come from different backgrounds, because of Provincetown and the fact that they're queer artists, their lives sort of intersect because of those things," he said.

His first documentary short, "Just a Broadway Baby: Mary Ellen Ashley," was released in 2021 and focuses on the life of the famed actress. In making that project, he learned a lot about how to approach his next.

"For this next film, I knew that I wanted to have more knowledge technically, of what I wanted to do and how I wanted to shoot the film," he said. "I knew that I wanted to be not just in someone's home, but I wanted to do B-roll. I wanted there to be stuff on the beach...on Commercial Street. A lot of that type of thing that I didn't have in my first film."

Meet Darlene Van Alstyne

Van Alstyne, a Boston native, moved to Provincetown in 2004 after a friend gave her the golden ticket to be a resident of the coveted arts town. She met Riviere and his husband, Shane, while working as the town clerk in Town Hall.

"When my husband and I went to get married years ago, we met Darlene (getting our) marriage license," Riviere said. "From there I found out what an incredible performer she was...and fell in love with her work and her as a person."

Now, she works in Human Resources for Provincetown Schools during the day and takes to the stage at night.

"I try to do as much as I can when I can," she said. "Which can be challenging because I also work a full-time day job...Trying to find that balance is sometimes challenging, but it seems to work out really well for me."

Van Alstyne knew she wanted to be a performer at the age of two and throughout her life has worn many hats in the entertainment world.

"In my youth, I wasn't really big on singing, except when it involved a musical, so I didn't develop a love for singing until much later on in life and never really considered myself a singer," she said. "As it turns out, I'm more of a singer now than an actor, which is kind of weird for me, but, I love all of it equally."

She found herself distanced from the entertainment world until 2007 when a friend she was working with persuaded her to come along to an audition for "The Wild Party," kickstarting her Provincetown stardom which has seen her sing alongside Sue Goldberg and Billy Hough and in several productions.

“Then I was in another play after that and then another play after and it just kept going and going,” she said. “I was on a roll and thought, ‘I think it's time for me to really get back into doing this seriously, like I used to, and audition more and just start getting myself out there more.’ And that's what I did.”

As for being part of "Artists at the Edge," Riviere invited Van Alstyne over Facebook to see his first documentary, hoping to interest her in joining his next project. She loved it and jumped at the chance.

“Truth be told, I am actually an extremely shy person, believe it or not,” she said. “So talking about myself has always been challenging. But I thought, 'Why don't I do this thing? Seems like a wonderful project. I adore Patrick and his husband and it's time that I learned how to talk about myself.'”

She hopes more work follows her after "Artists at the Edge" is released, but that audiences see her authentic self and Provincetown's unique arts community.

“...We're supportive of one another,” she said. “You don't have to be like a long-time performer to try something new in the arts community here. Someone will always support you...and give you pointers. That's something that you don't see in a lot of places.”

Meet Kenny Lockwood

Lockwood moved to Provincetown 12 years ago after living in New York City to focus his life more on painting in “one of the oldest art colonies in the country.” Since his move, he's been represented by two galleries and a variety of shows, including his latest “Paintings for the Quantum Millennium,” at the Provincetown Commons last month.

“My work and the nature of my work involves nature, the cosmos (and) heavenly bodies,” he said. “...The nature of my work tends to be abstraction, but it also deals with (the) representation of real or actual subjects. I like to use abstraction to bring that thing more toward the essence of what it is rather than the facsimile.”

Like Van Alysten, Lockwood is a person who dons many hats. A painter first and foremost, he's also an acupuncturist, Chinese herbologist and someone who dabbles in theater.

“I had an interest in drawing straight from the first time I picked up a pencil at four years old and discovered that I could draw,” he said. ‘All of a sudden I realized there was something I had to do.’”

He met Riviere when he first moved to town through his husband as they were both represented by the same gallery and became fast friends. Despite years of friendship, Lockwood was surprised when Riviere asked him to be part of the film.

"It's funny because my first thought was, 'Why me? There's (got) to be hundreds of artists in this town,' he said. "And then I just thought, 'Well, you know, Kenny, there's a reason he asked you, so just say yes, and go along for the ride. See what happens.'"

Production for "Artists at the Edge" began Sept. 18. A final cut is expected in February, though that lies in the hands of editor Laird Ogden.

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