



community development partnership

Creating opportunities for people to live, work, and thrive on the Lower Cape

Supporter Spotlight: Peter Hocking

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Peter Hocking
Artist, Provincetown Commons, CDP Advisory Council

Peter Hocking is many things. An artist, teacher, activist and writer, Peter also serves as the President of the Board of Directors of the Provincetown Commons and most recently was appointed to the CDP’s Advisory Council. Although Peter lives in Truro, much of his energy is spent in Provincetown immersed in seeing through a vision of creating a community space for artists.

As a child Peter spent many summers in Wellfleet visiting his mom’s cousin. “I was 13 years old, riding my 10 speed around the Outer Cape, and I had a revelation that I wanted to be an artist,” Peter recalls. “I felt a deep connection to the landscape... I wanted to be an artist -here.” While his parents weren’t overly supportive, stating simply that there were no jobs to be had on Cape Cod, Peter was determined to paint, and he ultimately pursued his undergraduate degree at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD).



After graduation, Peter took a position leading Brown University’s Center for Public Service where worked to develop university-community partnerships, undergraduate research opportunities, social entrepreneur projects, and to integrate community-based learning with academic study. When distance learning became an option in 2012, Peter seized the opportunity to move to Provincetown, which had been beckoning him since those days of riding around on his 10-speed.

Peter was writing a book and he rented a small studio apartment on Commercial Street that was located above a gallery. “I was talking to the gallerist about painting, and she suggested I show my paintings at the gallery,” reflects Peter. “I had never thought about building a painting career - and now here I am.”

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“When I first arrived in Provincetown, I didn’t feel a big community embrace,” says Peter. “There is a skepticism towards new people that I understand. People arrive, attachments are formed, then they must leave because they cannot find work or a place to live. Our hearts get broken.”

Five years ago, Peter started working with a small group of people to create a co-working environment for artists and creative thinkers. This concept is manifested in Provincetown Commons, “a place where people can just walk in and find a creative community.” It was during this time that “It became clear to me,” says Peter “that the CDP was the partner with whom we needed to talk to figure out the landscape.” CDP CEO Jay Coburn and Ann Robinson, CDP Chief Program Officer, became involved with the project. “Jay and Ann were extraordinarily generous in helping us,” states Peter.

Now President of the Board of Directors, Peter explains “I was really clear in my work as a professor and working with creative people for 30 years that we needed to fill in the spaces in between.” The idea was not to compete with the great work of Castle Hill, the Fine Arts Work Center or Provincetown Art Association. Instead, it was to offer artists an opportunity they couldn’t find elsewhere.

Provincetown Commons opened in 2019 and was immediately embraced by the artistic community. The CDP offered office hours several times a month to provide business assistance to those launching or growing a business on the Outer Cape. The Commons was opened for a year before the pandemic shut everything down and over the past few months it has opened its doors following public safety guidelines. During the closure “We learned that we have a role as ‘conveners.’ Our Executive Director has done a thoughtful job in bringing together the non-profits in the area to have conversations regarding their needs.” And while Peter is grateful to the CDP for our initial help in the planning process, he points to the ongoing collegiality and partnership. We are all looking forward to returning to full capacity and the CDP holding office hours once again.

While the pandemic has hit the artistic community – the “pain is unequal,” says Peter pointing to the performing arts, which were hit extremely hard, and the visual artists, for whom the situation was less economically acute. “If people were already represented in a gallery and were innovative, they were able to chug along,” notes Peter.

The pandemic has also created opportunities. Prior to, Peter taught 3-4 workshops a year at Provincetown Art Association and museum (PAAM). He is now teaching 1-2 workshops a month with PAAM. His workshops, conducted virtually, are fully booked by people from all over country who are now starting to develop an understanding of Provincetown as a center for the arts and arts education. Peter is focused on “how do we build that connection of a network of learners, and how do we continue to build a national and international business presence as well as what we do face to face as it expands to a larger audience.” Creating more national prominence for Provincetown is “part of my whole ethos as an artist. I want to make this place (Provincetown) accessible.”