

# Meet David Almeida, Caumsett And His Art



L-R: Caumsett Foundation Board Members, Bob Gannon (Garden Chair), Jordy Howard (Buildings Chair), Janet Barone (Foundation President), Kate Singer (Showhouse Design Chair), and Volunteer David Almeida (History Committee Member) in front of the Summer Cottage at Caumsett

Originally from Lisbon, David spent many happy years in Portugal until he moved to London on a whim in the late 1990s. That change of scenery launched a lust for travel and exploration that later brought David to Chicago, and then to Miami, followed by Amsterdam, and back to Miami, then Nashville, and now Locust Valley. Will he call this part of the world home for a while? If it were up to his kids, Liam and Norah ... yes, it will be home for a long time. David, his wife, Gina Wouters, and their children moved here for Gina's role as Executive Director of Planting Fields Foundation.

When David moved to London over two decades ago, he discovered the

art of photography. He received formal training in traditional photography at Barry University in Miami and has held a number of positions both as a staff member and as a freelancer for cultural institutions photographing art collections, exhibition installations, and digitizing rare archival documents. Since moving to Long Island, David has focused on his freelance work including architecture, landscape, and art photography. He recently expanded his business to include videography services, which he fine-tuned during his stay-at-home time during the pandemic.

While becoming proficient with the more traditional applications of photography, David also started using photography as a creative medium to produce artwork. He is the recipient of various grants and fellowships including the State of Florida Individual Artist Fellowship, the Artist Enhancement Grant, and the Artist Access Grant. In 2010 his Natural Selection series was awarded the West Prize. Highlights of collections and museums that have exhibited David's work include the Mary Brogan Museum of Arts, the West Collection, Mattie Kelly Arts Center, Noorderlicht Internationaal Fotofestival in Holland, the Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, and GEISAI Miami/Art Basel.

David's work focuses on the ironies and consequences of consumerism. This interest began while he was documenting discarded house goods in the streets of Miami Beach, showing through those objects the transient life in that coastal community. Later inspired by the extravagant lifestyle of Miami and the messages conveyed through seventeenth-century Dutch Vanitas paintings, he recreated still life images using mass-produced plastic replicas of objects and specimens once valued for their rarity. He's also presented artificial renditions of flora and fauna the same way these objects have been depicted in eighteenth-century natural history prints. The underlying goal in all these works is to question the value between the artificial and the natural, the fake and the real, while pointing to patterns of consumerism.

A week after moving to Locust Valley, David and his family set out to explore their new neighborhood and landed at Caumsett State Historic Park Preserve in Lloyd Harbor. It was love at first sight for David. He first created photographic studies of seascapes at Caumsett as a base for subsequent work and is using as a raw material one of the most common polluting elements affecting us globally, plastics. As a result of his engagement with Caumsett, David's artistic practice expanded to move be-



Gina and David

yond solely photography-based work to working with mixed media. With found balloons and their weathered surfaces, bold and unnatural colors, David recreates the sky, water, and land in seascapes, as they will appear 100 years from today in a scenario where the environment has been visually altered by pollution. This idea comes not only from balloons he is finding and collecting everywhere but also from what one constantly sees or hears in the news, i.e. "yellow fog in Bangkok," "red tide in Florida," "islands and rivers of plastic," and so on. At the center, literally and figuratively, of the work is the horizon line, which represents hope and possibilities for a brighter future.

David and his family can be found at Caumsett several times a week, taking up to five-mile hikes on the meandering trails. David's favorite path is the one that takes you straight to the beach. He has walked this dozens of times, very frequently on a quest to find polluting materials, most often in the form of balloons. Liam and Norah have helped their Dad a number of times. Finding balloons in the bushes or dangling from a tree has become a family pastime. Learn more about David's artwork at [www.davidalmeida.net](http://www.davidalmeida.net).

David began collaborating with the Caumsett Foundation after learning that the organization was seeking to digitize their archives. Since then, he joined the History Committee along with other members who have history and library backgrounds. This group is working together to think about the preservation of the archives, but perhaps more importantly, how to provide broad access to this collection. Additionally, David recently photographed the former Summer Cottage to document the pre-construction condition of the residence.

The Summer Cottage is a two-story brick 5,300 square foot residence designed in the Colonial Revival style containing both Georgian and Federal-era detailing. The cottage is now being restored back to its former glory in preparation for a Designer Showhouse, which will be on view to the

public beginning in early October. The Foundation has made arrangements with more than twenty top interior designers and decorative artists from the New York metropolitan area that will transform the structure into a decorating masterpiece.

The Caumsett Foundation is recognized throughout New York as a model State park "friends group." The Foundation works closely with the New York State Parks Department with the common goal of supporting and enhancing the unique and historic environment of the 1500-acre Caumsett State Historic Park Preserve.

**To find out more about the Caumsett Foundation, you may visit [www.caumsettfoundation.org](http://www.caumsettfoundation.org).**



Liam and Norah collecting plastics at Caumsett



Gina, Liam, Norah, and David



Gina, Norah, Liam, and David



Collected plastics in two hours at Caumsett



Study for a Plastic Landscape #08 (Caumsett 2119), 2019, 24"x 36", Archival Inkjet Print



Seascape #06, 2019, 11"x 14", found balloons on gesso board



Study for a Plastic Landscape #09 (Caumsett 2119), 2019, 24"x 36", Archival Inkjet Print



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