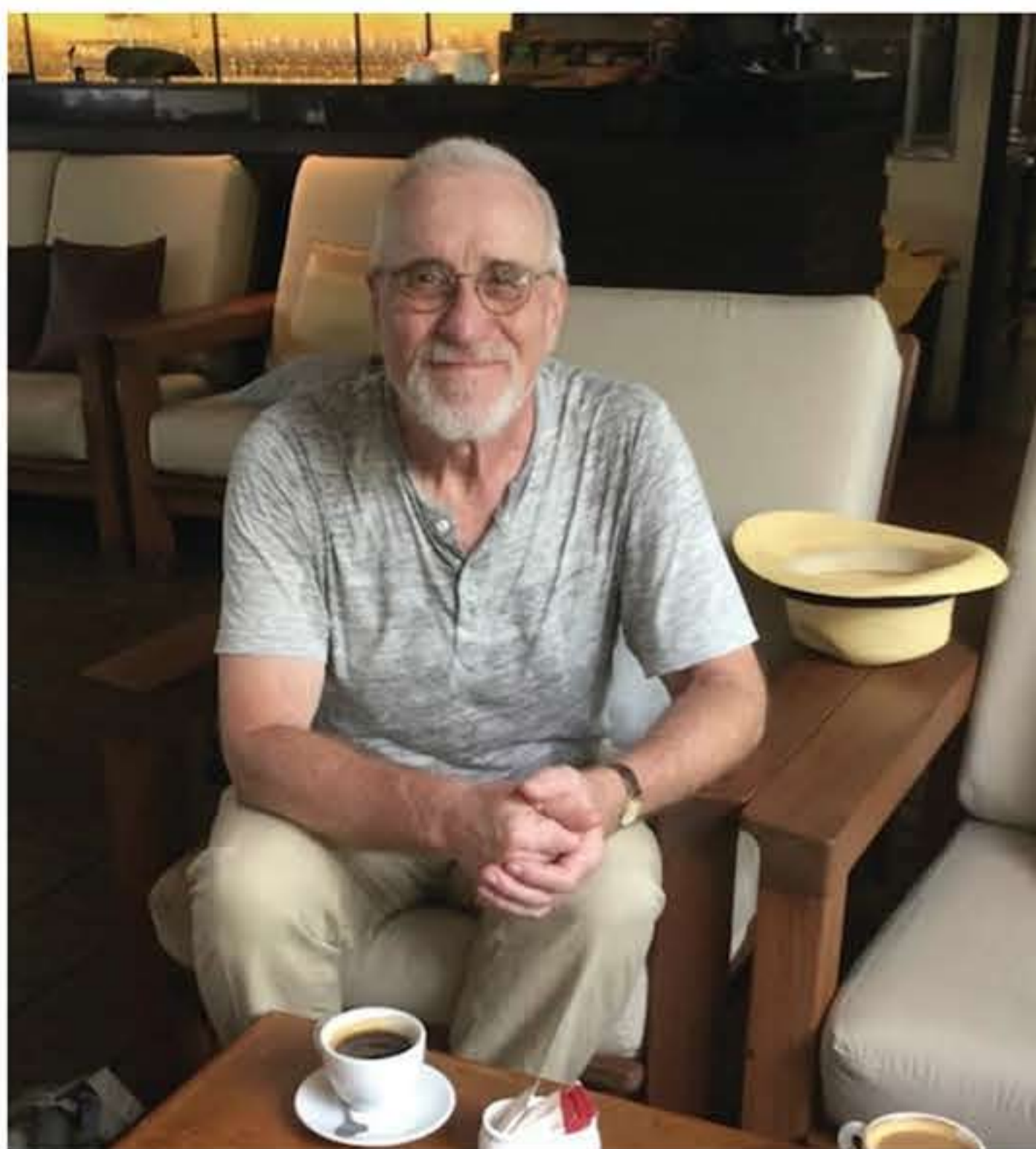


Brooklyn artist Leendert van der Pool wins Coast Guard Art Program prize



Artist Leendert van der Pool. Photo courtesy of the artist

Exhibit next travels to Federal Hall, which shares history with Coast Guard

By Francesca Norsen Tate
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Cobble Hill resident Leendert van der Pool is the winner of this year's George Gray Award for Artistic Excellence, which is named for the co-founder of the Coast Guard Art program.

The Coast Guard Art Program (COGAP) makes use of fine art to educate diverse audiences about the work of the U.S. Coast Guard and the challenges it addresses in maintaining the nation's security, both home and abroad, according to the printed program for the July 12 reception and Acceptance Ceremony, which was held at the Salmagundi Art Club in Manhattan and had the largest attendance ever — at standing-room capacity.

COGAP has a talented core of artists — professional and avocational — who donate their talent, time and works to the Coast Guard. Many of these works capture the Coast Guard in action — rescue missions, such as

in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, ice rescues, aid to wildlife and endangered species, scientific research in the Arctic, drug interdictions and life aboard Coast Guard vessels.

This branch of the military service has more than 42,000 active duty men and women, and reservists and Auxiliary members. The Salmagundi Club, founded in 1871, has been a partner with COGAP since the program's inception in 1981.

"The George Gray Award for Artistic Excellence recognizes Coast Guard artists for outstanding artistic achievement," according to the ceremony program. One contributor from each year's collection is named as the winner of this award.

Gray worked as an artist for seven decades before his death at age 96 in 2004. During that time, he was a muralist and illustrator, specializing in historical and military themes. He enlisted in the Coast Guard during World War II. Later, during the Vietnam War, he devoted six weeks to sketching the Marines in action for the US Navy fine arts program. Inspired, he founded the Coast Guard Art Program in 1981 and served as its chairman for more than 20 years.

This year's George Gray winner, Leendert van der Pool, was born in the Netherlands. He brings to his artistry his own experience at sea, working on freighters, coasters and salvage ships for his 15 years in the Dutch merchant marine. His early artwork reflects the influences of these years.

A self-taught artist specializing in drawings, pastels and oil paintings, van der Pool has exhibited his work widely in museums and galleries in Europe since the late 1970s, and, more recently, in the United States, with recent shows of the Ellis Island series at the Ellis Island Museum the Franklin 54 Gallery in New York City. His drawings have been included in numerous books as well as several museum collections. Recent group shows have included exhibitions in Shanghai, Taiwan and Paris.

A member of the Pastel Society of America and the Salmagundi Club in New York, van der Pool has received numerous prizes for his artwork, including the first prize at the Pastel Society of America 30th Annual Exhibition.

Van der Pool, who divides his time between New York and Paris, was in France when the ceremony took place. His award was presented in absentia.



Philippe Debeusscher on behalf of COGAP



Rear Admiral Melissa Bert and Salmagundi Club President Robert Pillsbury stand with the winning painting of this year's COGAP exhibit. Titled "Partnership," the oil painting is by Brooklyn artist Leendert van der Pool. Eagle photo by Francesca N. Tate

Another key Brooklyn COGAP artist is **Karen Loew**, a longtime Grace Church parishioner and for many years a Brooklyn resident. Loew is chairman of the COGAP Committee at the Salmagundi Club, and is a 2011 recipient of the Coast Guard Distinguished Public Service Award, the highest recognition given to those who have made outstanding contributions in advancing the Coast Guard's missions. She is also a recipient of the COGAP George Gray Award for Artistic Excellence and a regular contributor of her paintings to the program. Her work is in numerous private collections and her Purchase Prize Award winner "Must Be Heaven" is included

in the Curator's Collection at Salmagundi Club.

Accepting the 2018 Collection on behalf of the Coast Guard during the July 12 ceremony was Rear Admiral Melissa Bert, director of governmental and public affairs for the Coast Guard. Bert is responsible for engagement with Congress, the media and other inter-governmental entities. The New York native expressed great appreciation for the works in the exhibit.

"This evening we were walking around, going through the paintings. Each of them brings up stories ... It just brings back great memories of a long career," which, she said, started when she joined the Coast Guard right after high school. Her father, also, served with the Coast Guard.

The COGAP exhibit will be open through July 20. Salmagundi Club gallery hours are 1-6 p.m. weekdays. However, New Yorkers will still have the chance to view the exhibit from July 25 through Sept. 27 at Federal Hall National Memorial in Lower Manhattan.

Federal Hall is an ideal venue for this exhibition as this national park shares history with the Coast Guard. When Alexander Hamilton was Secretary of the Treasury, he had offices at 26 Wall Street — site of the modern-day memorial — in what was the first capital of the U.S. While secretary, Hamilton established the Revenue Cutter Service, an armed maritime law enforcement service that's considered the forerunner of today's Coast Guard.