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## **NNB News : 2013 : 10 : 17 : Local Haven for Creative Minds In St. Petersburg**

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🕒 October 17, 2013 📁 Midtown 💬 No comments

## LOCAL HAVEN FOR CREATIVE MINDS IN ST. PETERSBURG

BY COURTNEY PARISH

*NNB Student Reporter*

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Marina Williams, local artist and owner of ARTpool Gallery/Café/Vintage Shop has always been different. Williams is a St. Petersburg, Fla. native and has made herself irreplaceable in the St. Petersburg Art Scene. She graduated from New College, with a B.F.A and received a M.A. in Photography from the University of East London.

Williams worked as a photographer, traveling some of Europe's famous artistic cities. She searched for a gallery to showcase her work, but could not find one that was a good fit. Upon returning home to St. Petersburg, Williams decided to address the problem head on.

Armed with \$1,000 a Fine Arts Degree and vision, Williams returned to St. Petersburg bringing the indie art scene with her. In 2008, Williams and her partner Evan Williams opened their art gallery, ARTpool. The money was just enough to buy some paint and planks to build a picture hanging system.

Williams' vision was to have an artistic space that fostered a creative and cooperative, forward thinking environment. This isn't your typical palm trees and beach art Florida gallery. Artists, pay to rent wall space in the gallery, and they are allowed to keep 100 percent of the profit when a piece sells.

Williams's passion for vintage, oddities and Mid Century Dutch Modern furniture started at a young age and was encouraged by her mother. Working as a photographer, Williams loved organizing vintage photo shoots. Arranging the clothes and wearable art on the models lead her to start experimenting with up cycling, putting new touches on vintage clothes, and designing her own wearable art and street attire. It has always been a dream of hers to own a vintage store. When she earned enough money to expand ARTpool, adding a vintage clothing store seemed like the logical next step.

ARTpool reopened in a mechanic shop off Central Ave. near Haslam's Book Store. Williams transformed her business from a gallery to a destination. In addition to a vintage shop, she and Evan added a record store and café. The new space allows them to host a fashion show/ art party once a month. Each show features a different theme. The artist and designers all work together to set up the event and create themed pieces to sell.

In six years, Williams has established a niche in the community. Some of her fashion shows have turned into an annual tradition. Trashion Fashion is inspired by Williams's passion for preservation of the environment. The show features clothing made from recycled materials.

Another trend that Williams made popular in the St. Petersburg area is body paint shows. Muse is a



Courtney Parish | NNB  
Marina Williams, posing in front a display in her ARTpool vintage shop.

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body paint fashion show that is held in February. Anyone from the community can participate in the fashion show or volunteer for the event. This month, the theme is Space Odyssey; the event takes place on Sept.14, 2013 from 8 p.m. to midnight. It will be held at ARTpool, tickets are \$10.00 at the door.

By hosting these events, Williams is encouraging and directing attention to the St. Petersburg art scene, which has really taken off over the past few years.

"The art scene has grown and gotten a lot of momentum and it facilitates growth for more. Each neighborhood like Kenwood and Central got settled and grew and they feed off of each other, which led to the Warehouse Arts District. I think that uniformity and support for one another is key for the continual growth of the art community," Williams said.

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