



Nefetari Dennard adds the finishing touches to her booth full of art and fashion accessories at the Tallahassee Automobile Museum for the inaugural Capital Craft Fest on March 16, 2019. Dennard is now preparing for her Fuzzy Pineapple Fest on Oct. 16, 2021. ALICIA DEVINE/TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

Space for diversity

Fuzzy Pineapple reboots Craft Festival, plans new storefront

Amanda Sieradzki Council on Culture & Arts

Nefetari Dennard had a mini-viral moment in the throes of 2020. The CEO and founder of The Fuzzy Pineapple had placed the annual Art + Craft Festival on hold in 2019 with plans to come back full force in 2021. The timing was opportune for Dennard given the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. * Despite that historic year's setbacks, Dennard's online shop got the attention of social media influencers. Many re-posted her merchandise and content to show solidarity with black-owned businesses during the height of the Black Lives Matter protests. One company shared Dennard's store with their 2 million followers which resulted in six months' worth of orders being placed in the span of two days.

"That was the avalanche," recalls Dennard. "I closed my business down to focus on that."

Dennard's sights are set on re-opening her business at a new physical location by November. Preceding that to-be-determined date, she is excited to launch the fifth annual The Fuzzy Pineapple Art + Craft Festival: TFP Fest on Saturday October 16.

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If you go

- What:** The Fuzzy Pineapple Art + Craft Festival: TFP Fest
- When:** 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 16
- Where:** 1205 S. Adams St
- Cost:** Free
- Contact:** For more information, call 850-566-5661 or visit thefuzzypineapple.com



The fifth annual The Fuzzy Pineapple Art + Craft Festival: TFP Fest is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021. TALLAHASSEE



Performers at a previous Fuzzy Pineapple event. TALLAHASSEE

Craft Festival

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This will be the first time the festival is hosted at the new storefront. Dennard says this is one of the few festivals where there is no fee to apply which makes it a perfect first step for burgeoning creative businesses.

A space for diverse artists

“I remember what it feels like to not know what to do,” says Dennard. “When you get into the festival world there’s a lot of gatekeeping and most people don’t know what they need to do. Nothing is worse when you’re first starting out, and you’re already questioning yourself, and then you’re not getting any sales. I like to help people get their businesses and their confidence up.”

Dennard’s mission is to provide space for diverse, independent artists and generate artistic and economic growth in the Tallahassee area.

She has built a bridge for new and emerging artists that she wishes would have existed for her when she first started out.

Her business has grown significantly since she began at age sixteen.

Dennard earned her degree in graphic design from FAMU with a focus on fine arts and photography. While jewelry and accessories served as the foundation of her business for many years, she’s since expanded into apparel, especially tie-dye given its current ascent into the fashion spotlight.

“I did a promotion where [people who ordered an item] got a surprise hoodie,” says Dennard. “I got great reviews from people after that, and it snowballed from there.”

Turning tie-dye into a science

Tie-dye is a new process for Dennard, who says she prefers a set of paints and a brush when it comes to artistic outlets. Tie-dyeing is labor intensive, and Dennard explains that it can take as long as a month to test a new item.

Since many of her orders are wholesale, which means they must all be uniform, she has learned how difficult it is to reproduce tie-dye effects given factors like the amount of water used and the humidity and temperature indoors and outdoors.

Dennard built a 10 foot by 9 foot wall covered in swatches to boil down tie-dyeing to a science. She keeps a log of how much dye she uses for each swatch and “sketches” out ideas on fabric to see how the chemical processes will translate into designs.

“I would never have known how difficult it is to get things exactly the same,” says Dennard. “You can have so much dye in a bottle and it won’t flow the same way, or it might dye faster or the chemical process of adding water might make it heat up and burn your fabric.”

While she enjoys the business and science behind creating merchandise, Dennard is slowly starting to transition from creator to administrator.

She says that once she establishes a process, she has started outsourcing and delegating production to other people. Slowly, she hopes to reclaim her time and get back to painting as her main artistic outlet.

Art 'has no rules'

“Art is therapy,” says Dennard. “I’m passionate about art because it has no rules. It has an audience, but it doesn’t require an audience. It’s completely limitless and I really enjoy that notion of freedom.”

In the meantime, she is looking forward to stepping back into another satisfying role—mentoring new artists and presenting their work at the festival. Just like a swirl of tie-dye, the festival’s offerings are an explosion of literal color.

There’s the pineapple costume contest, art installations, photo booths, a body art show, scavenger hunt, yoga, watercolor, fashion shows, and countless activity booths hosted by local organizations.

Dennard always introduces a new component each year and plans to bring back a mobile art station and human-sized board games.

“There’s a certain level of elation I get from seeing other people succeed,” says Dennard. “I always equate it to watching a kid open up their Christmas gifts. That’s my favorite part. I would like this to be a carefree place of happy, sunshine, rainbows and unicorn magic.”

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area’s umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).