

Behind the Scenes

Learn about the talented key maker for the SEASIDE® Prize™

By Kimberly Stanley
Marketing & Development Coordinator,
SEASIDE Institute™

The SEASIDE Prize™ is a testament to the life’s work of individuals with a passion for the New Urbanist approach to development. Receiving the Prize is a high honor among architects, scholars and like-minded individuals. During the awards ceremony, the recipient is gifted with a symbolic bronze key to the town. Since the early 2000s, Manish Wagh-dhare has been the metal expert entrusted with the responsibility of capturing the true essence of Seaside with his creation of this key.

Manish was born and raised in the heart of Mumbai, an area surrounded by towering apartment buildings and iconic art décor. His journey began with a curious exploration of the past. Growing up in Girgaum, surrounded by the vibrant energy of cinema theaters and the allure of a local chor bazaar (flea market), every old object purchased there held a story waiting to be retold, so he would repurpose the objects and add a new twist. The son of a metal craftsman, Manish watched his father create etched signs and found himself drawn to a similar path of creativity.

Encouraged by his father, Manish enrolled in the esteemed Sir J.J. School of Art, one of the oldest and most prestigious colleges in India, where his talents were nurtured and guided throughout his time there. Upon graduating from college, he opened his own art studio and made custom designed objects for various architects, such as metal doors, light fixtures, and wall murals.

In 1996, Manish met Dhiru Thadani, an esteemed architect and urbanist,



Post Office air vents

who was interested in hiring him for some metal work. Upon his successful completion of a residential commission piece, they continued their relationship remotely. Dhiru would email the initial designs and Manish would craft each masterpiece meticulously, paying close attention to detail. Many of his creations can be found throughout Seaside, such as the light fixture enclosures in the old Academic Village, the Tholos Pavilion medallion at Bud & Alley’s Waterfront Restaurant, the Lyceum Amphitheater medallion, air vents at the Seaside Post Office and the shower along the boardwalk. Each was handcrafted with immense attention to detail and shipped across the globe to be lovingly displayed throughout the town.

Manish’s most intricate creation, by far, was the SEASIDE Prize™ key. The keys are entirely handmade, beginning with a study of the sketch to create a master pattern. He uses a photo-etching technique to draw the aerial town map onto a copper plate. The outline is then cut using a jigsaw blade. The ring and shaft are brazed together and Manish uses a sand-casting process to form the key impression before pouring molten



Manish Waghdhare in his studio Photos by Dhiru Thadani

brass into the mold. It is then allowed to cool before oxidizing and coating with lacquer. The overall process takes about 36 hours from start to finish, with each end product being a one of a kind replica of the original mold. He says the SEASIDE Prize™ keys are very close to his heart.

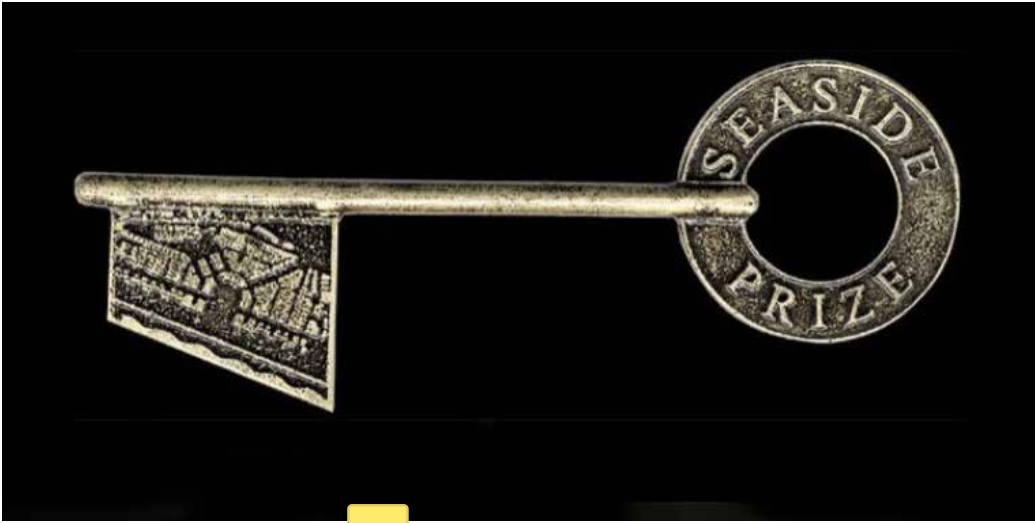
Beyond the confines of his studio, Manish has also participated in many international symposiums and competitions. From marble work in Colorado and ice sculptures in France to wood sculptures in Russia, his mark has been made across multiple continents. Solo shows and group exhibitions have further showcased his talents, earning him recognition far beyond the reach of his hometown.

Today, amidst the tranquility of his studios in Mumbai and Karjat, he con-

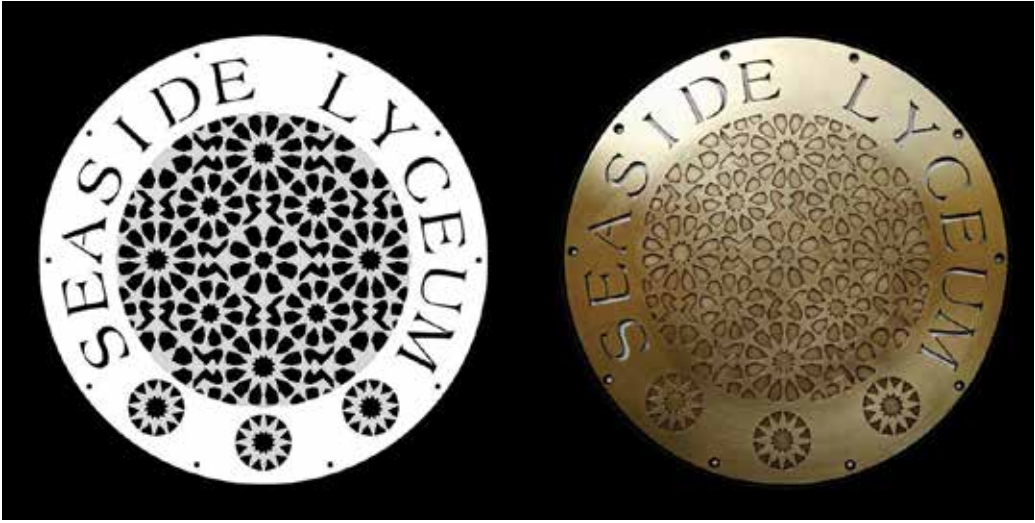


The boardwalk shower in Seaside

tinues to weave stories in metal and wood, each creation a testament to a journey that began in the bustling streets of Mumbai. The design of the Prize key is a culmination of craftsmanship and symbolism, representing the legacy of a town with a rich history and vibrant fu-



A closer look at the SEASIDE Prize™ key



Lyceum Amphitheater medallion



Light fixture enclosures in the Academic Village

Advancing Resilience Efforts Workshop

Disaster preparedness is vital in Walton County

By Kimberly Stanley
Marketing & Development Coordinator,
SEASIDE Institute™

The SEASIDE Institute™ recently sponsored a countywide resilience workshop in DeFuniak Springs. This workshop, led by The Water Institute from New Orleans, La., focused on advancing resilience efforts across Walton County. The discussions centered on fortifying both inland and coastal regions against various threats including climate change, hurricanes, flash flooding and other natural disasters.

Communities thrive on collective action during a crisis and the resilience of a community is gauged by its ability to withstand shocks, adapt and promptly recover. Walton County, spanning nearly 140,000 square miles, includes a diverse array of landscapes, including forests, lakes, coastal dunes, creeks, bays and the Gulf of Mexico shoreline. The county faces risks from

rising sea levels, intensifying storms, ecological issues, and other disasters. Disaster preparedness is essential for the community to prosper.

The workshop brought together stakeholders from North and South Walton for a comprehensive dialogue on tailored resilience strategies. Key takeaways emphasized ecosystem restoration, responsible land use planning, mitigation strategies, and community engagement. Integrating solutions like enhanced disaster preparedness, flood mitigation and wetland preservation can strengthen the county’s defenses while preserving its natural assets.

The workshop highlighted the interconnectedness of communities, emphasizing the need for collaboration across the county. Citizens play a vital role in crisis response, long-term adaptation and sustainable growth. Stakeholders found the workshop beneficial, providing insights for positive progress. 🌱



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