

Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

Buy Art, Buy Art From Our Supporters

Every year at this time I try to deliver the message of buying art for the holidays. With all the slogans out there: Buy American, Buy Handmade, Shop Local, Small Business Saturday, etc., I can't think of any product that fits all these categories better than art. By buying local and handmade art you're almost assured of buying American and from a small business. I can't say that for all the art that is out there.

Your options range from giving fine art and fine craft, purchasing someone a membership in an arts organization or paying for an art class or workshop, to giving an art book or making a donation in someone's name. As creative as the arts are - so are the opportunities to support them.

On Page 13 we have an article about some art books that would make great gifts.

And, if you're so inclined to agree with my suggestion, I can't think of a better group to support than our supporters. They make this paper possible.

There's no better gift that you can give Linda or I than to show your support to our supporters, by spending money with them or at least expressing your appreciation for their support. They'd really like to know that you appreciate and recognize their support.

And, after you've given the gift of art to everyone on your list - go ahead - give yourself the gift of art. It's OK - just tell anyone who complains that I said it was OK.

The Suggestion Box is Open

Next month we enter into our 25th year of doing an arts newspaper. We've got some new ideas we're going to offer starting in the new year and we invite readers to offer suggestions that they would like to see in *Carolina Arts* - which enters its 15th year. I

can't guarantee we'll act on all suggestions offered, but we're interested in seeing what we're not offering, what people would like to see included in the paper.

And, I can tell you right now - hold the suggestions to go back to a print version - there is no going back now. We're a bigger and better paper online and more people are following us now than have in our 24 years.

Also, it won't do any good to suggest that I hit the road more often to see more exhibits and visual art events for my reports on the blogs and Facebook. I'm already stretched with what little I get to see. Producing a 50+ page paper every month covering two states is hard enough just sitting at the computer all day. I'd love to get out more and into the far reaches of the Carolinas, but every time I do - no publishing elves fill in while I'm gone.

I had always hoped that folks who are knowledgeable of events going on in their area would step forward to report on what's going on. I can only offer the same pay I get and the exposure to our readers and perhaps some promotion in the paper. But, over the years any offers that came along were tied to a big paycheck. We're not making that kind of money at *Carolina Arts*. Anyone who takes a close look at the paper knows that.

So, we're looking for easy, cheap, and doable suggestions that could improve the paper.

Watching the Numbers Grow

After a record month in October - in terms of pages and downloads of the paper, I didn't expect to break that record in just ten days in November. We had over 68,360 downloads in October and in the first ten days of November we had 71,752 downloads. The first ten days of the month is usually when the bulk of the downloads take



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place, but still there can be some surprises during the rest of the month. With just a day or two left to go we have had over 79,000 downloads during November. Not bad for a month with a long holiday weekend.

It seems apparent that the number of pages do not necessarily mean the most downloads. This December issue is smaller than our November issue, which was smaller than our October issue and for all I know the December issue will set a new record - or not. But, you never know - at least I don't have a clue what will happen every month. I'm just very happy that people who receive the notice of the paper's release from us - spread the paper around to people on their e-mail list. And, than many of them pass it along too.

We're also seeing increased interest in the info stored on the *Carolina Arts* website and blogs. The website has been added to constantly every month over the last 12 years. My blog *Carolina Arts Unleashed* offers over 500 entries from the last four years and *Carolina Arts News* has offered over

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Wishing you Christmas joy all year!



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