

Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

In Like A Lion, Out Like A Lion

Who else is glad to see March madness out of here? And I'm not talking about basketball.

Doing this April issue was quite a task, but we made it - even if it took us right up to the last minute of the last hour of the last day of the month. Cleaning up after the ice storm we took a good bit of working-on-the-paper-time this month. But all that mess is finally cleaned up and gone.

Here's hoping April will be normal - as far as the weather goes. I'm sure we're all tired of the Winter roller coaster we have been on. I'm still not ready for what Summer can bring, but it would be nice to enjoy some steady weather.

Things Are Really Heating Up In The Visual Art Community

In this issue we have 83 pages of info about what's going on in the visual art community of the Carolinas. That's a lot of info, but there will be even more next month.

Here's a warning for all you people who will be sending us info for that May issue. Don't wait for the deadline to come to send your info in. Send your info in early - well before the deadline of Apr. 24 at 5pm.

There were about a half dozen press releases that came in after the Mar. 24 deadline and we couldn't fit them in. As some people know, sometimes we can fit some late items in, but when it's a stampede - we just can't - no matter what the story is for them being late. We had our hands full working on what came in on time.

So my warning is - don't wait for the last minute to get your info in for the May issue - as it's going to be a monster issue because of all the events taking place in May.

Just off hand, I'm talking about the

Spoletto Festival and its companion Piccolo Spoletto Festival, in Charleston, SC, Artisphere in Greenville, SC, the North Charleston (SC) Arts Festival, FireFest at STARworks in Star, NC, The Red Rose Festival in Lancaster, SC, Heritage Trail Pottery Tour & Sale in Greenwood, SC, Sculpture in the South in Summerville, SC, and for some reason ArtFields in Lake City, SC, decided to stick its toe into May - when it should have stuck to its April dates. And, these are just some of the events we know about.

That's a lot of presenters who are hoping to attract visitors to their event while other cities are hosting their own events that they hope will attract out-of-town folks.

May is getting to be a dog eat dog month for art events. Not to mention other events like sporting events, high school and college graduations, and the beginning of some folk's summer vacations.

Some folks would say it's a great month because of all the choices they have, while others just see - activity overload.

Scheduling in the arts has been a problem throughout the ages from the first time the first artists had conflicting dates for people to come see their cave drawings.

So the competition begins. One artist offers a torch for every visitor, the next artist offers a torch and dried strips of Mastodon meat, and another offers the torch, strips of Mastodon meat and a bowl of homemade grog. The really clever cave artist comes up with the idea of having young cave girls to hold your torch for you - the competition never ends.

I guess some of this can be blamed on the weather we get here in the Carolinas - warm Summers and Cool Winters. In some places that means a possibility of 100+ (you know what I'm talking about), freezing rain, and

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sometimes snow. Which leaves only two seasons to safely schedule an event - Spring and Fall.

What's an art event organizer to do? If you have a solution - there are a lot of folks who would like to hear it.

Take the Art Walk/Crawl situation. If every city eventually has one on the 1st Friday, that's not good for attracting folks from other cities to come visit. So some people moved their event to the 2nd Friday, and 3rd Friday, and some the 4th Friday. Now we have some folks doing their Art Walk/Crawls on Thursdays.

Again, there are never enough days in the week or month to schedule an event and not be in competition with someone else's event.

I guess we should all be glad we have so much going on in the Carolinas, but for those providing those events or planning to offer a new event - this is a big problem. I guess one solution is to not get stuck in a rut going to the same event year after year. Step out of your box every once in a while.

ArtFields 2.0

Last year I was fairly supportive of ArtFields, the art exhibit and competition that takes place in the small community of Lake City, SC. I had hoped this would be a great new visual art event - offering artists an opportunity for exposure and for a few - a chance to win big bucks. I still think it is a great opportunity for some, but I've had to pull back some on that support and because I asked some questions - as I always do - ArtFields also pulled back on using us as a way to promote the event. That's OK, over the years I'm well aware of the results of asking questions when people don't want to give answers - for one reason or another.

Some folks will cut you off if you offer any criticism at all - like the SC Arts Commission. *Carolina Arts* was removed from their PR list (several times) for not playing ball the way they wanted to - as if we wouldn't find out what they are up to anyway. Someone always wants to whisper in my ear about something they don't like either, but wants to stay in the shadows.

Some people will cut you off if you just ask questions they hoped no one would. And, I just can't seem to not ask questions when something seems wrong or even just a little fuzzy. And, if people don't want to offer answers, all you can do is think something must be wrong. I don't know if anything is really wrong or not, but if I never get any answers and they cut you out of the information loop - what should you think?

My one question to ArtFields was to know the number of votes the top winners got in last year's competition. It's a very simple question and one that should be easy to come up with, but I never got the answer.

They seem to be able to tell us some numbers, like they say 22,000 visited the event. A number that it would seem harder to come up with than how many votes the winners got. They also told the Florence, SC, newspaper that when it comes to the voting - 5,965 people registered to vote, but only 2,443 votes were cast.

Out of those 2,443 votes cast there were 400 works they could vote for, and since they had to count those votes to come up with the winners or who qualified to be selected for the top prize - comprised of popular votes and the selection by a jury panel - it just would seem to follow that they had to have a list that had the numbers on how many votes each work in the exhibit got. But it seems for some reason they don't want to give that number to the public.

I've done a Google news tag on ArtFields so I've seen most of the articles written about the event. Most are coming from the Florence newspaper. But I've never seen any mention of how many votes put \$100,000 in the pocket of the top winner.

As far as I know, if you get one more vote than the other person or all other persons in a voting process - you're the winner. It doesn't matter if you got 1,500 votes, 1,000, votes, 495 votes or 50 votes - as long as you got one more than anyone else - you win.

So I don't see what the problem is in giving the vote totals. A bigger problem is - why did almost 6,000 people register to vote, yet only less than 2,500 cast a vote?

Questions bad - Answers worse.



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