

# Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

## ArtFields 2018

So here I am giving my opinion about ArtFields 2018, which I did not go see in person. I have never had a problem with the art seen at the various ArtFields' events, with a few exceptions, but that's not where my grip with the event lies. I'll consider returning to ArtFields after the organizers answers some questions about the voting process - where there were obvious problems - so much so that this year they made a major change.

This comes right from their website: "The \$50,000 Top Prize winner used to be selected by the jury from the top-50 vote getters for the People's Choice awards. That has changed. For ArtFields 2018, we have eliminated the link between Top Prize and People's Choice voting. As was the case already for the \$25,000 second-place Juried Prize, the top prize, too, is now a straightforward jury award. We've also renamed the two top awards as 'Grand Prize' and 'Second Place.'"

So the jurors are no longer bound to select a work for the Grand Prize out of the top 50 vote-getting works. Meaning to heck with what the local people visiting ArtFields think about art. We, the judges and organizers will tell them what good art looks like. And, if you want to see what the locals like, just check out the People's Choice winners for the last six years. I can tell you now the Grand Prize and Second Place winners won't ever look like what the public likes in the future - until the next rehaul of the event.

From the start, organizers have never wanted to talk about the voting process, how many votes top prizes received or why people registered to vote but then never voted. The only info I got out of one staff member was that a little over

5,000 registered the first year, but less than 2,500 voted - and that was out of the estimated 20,000 who they say attended the first year's event. That was the result of a paid estimate. That staff member who gave me that info was later fired for embezzling \$20,000 or so from ArtFields. Maybe that person felt like - if they can make up a number like 20,000 - so can I - that \$20,000 is mine not ArtFields.

There used to be people involved with ArtFields who tried to be as open about ArtFields as they were allowed. They saw me as a friend to ArtFields, but they're all gone now - so called retired, fired, or just let go. Probably because they talked too much with me. Apparently Lake City and ArtFields has secrets that no one should know.

The 2015 ArtFields was the last one I attended, and because of their lack of communications or transparency I might never see another one. I can look each year at the Artist's Gallery to see what work is being shown, and there are always a few works I wish I could see in person, but for the most part ArtFields looks like many other State Art Agency sponsored shows, college & university Senior shows, or any juried competition. Some artists seem to be stuck in a rut showing pretty much the same art, year after year, and many artists don't seem to catch on to the fact that it's probably going to take something more than they usually do to catch the juror's eyes.

This year, 55% of the artists came from SC, which was 60% in 2017. NC had 64 artists participate, up ten (54) from 2017, and GA had the third most artists with 51 this year and (47) in 2017. From the other nine states in the competition - not so much. But next year I think some of those

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