

Some Exhibits Still On View

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ols, Cotton Ketchie, Jack Greenfield, Phillip Philbeck, John Furches, Gary Freeman, Richard Oversmith, Scott Boyle and Frederick Craig Franz. For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Museum at 828/327-8576 or visit (www.hickorymuseumofart.org).



Spring Azure by Phil Hathcock, Best of Show

The City of North Charleston's Cultural Arts Department in North Charleston, SC, is presenting the 7th Annual National Outdoor Sculpture Competition & Exhibition, on view at Riverfront Park, located at the former Charleston Naval Base in North Charleston, through Mar. 31, 2013. View thought provoking, large-scale sculptures by established and emerging artists from across the nation, juried by Steven Matijcio, curator of Contemporary Art for the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art

(SECCA). Participating artists include: Leo Osborne – Anacortes, WA; Carl Wright – Martinsburg, WV; Philip Hathcock – Cary, NC; Corrina Mensoff – Atlanta, GA; Jim Gallucci – Greensboro, NC; Matthew Harding – Greenville, NC; Tom Scicluna – Miami, FL; Bob Turan – Earlton, NY; Adam Walls – Lauvinburg, NC; Davis Whitfield IV – Mountain City, TN; Paris Alexander – Raleigh, NC; and Carl Billingsley – Ayden, NC. For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Department at 843/740-5854 or visit (<http://bit.ly/culturalarts>).

The lives and advanced culture of the ancient Indians of Central America are revealed to exciting effect in the South Carolina State Museum's new blockbuster exhibit, *Secrets of the Maya*, on view at the Museum in Columbia, SC, through June 9, 2013. The exhibition combines more than 125 artifacts dating to 2000 BC, a gallery of photos, reproductions of stone carvings, and artifacts made by the Maya people who survive today to paint a clearer portrait than has previously been seen of this historically mysterious culture. For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Museum at 803/898-4921 or visit (www.southcarolinastatemuseum.org).

Tom Starland: An Interview With Myself - Part III

with questions and answers by Tom Starland

Twelve years ago, back in the year 2000, I came up with an interesting idea - I would interview myself so I could address some issues on my mind. No one else in the media seemed to be interested, so why not do it myself? My ego isn't that big that I wasted space in our printed papers to include such a self-serving piece, and they were too long to include anyway. So they were posted only on our website (www.carolinaarts.com) - where they are today (Archives - Special Features), and every once in a while someone comes across them and really learns something about this paper and me - if they can get through it all. In reading back over them I have to say, if anything I'm consistent. My opinions have stayed the same on most of the subjects covered, although some of the subjects have gone through major changes or disappeared all together.

The first interview dealt with a lot of the paper's history. *Tom Starland: An Interview With Myself*, with questions asked by Tom Starland was offered in May/June 2000. You can read it at this link (<http://www.carolinaarts.com/600tominterview.html>).

The second interview dealt with a lot of frustrations about how bad things in the visual art community were - in 2006. *Tom Starland: An Interview With Myself - Part II*, with questions asked by Tom Starland was offered in March 2006. Things were bad, but who knew the bottom was going to drop out in 2008. You can read it at this link (<http://www.carolinaarts.com/306tominterview2.html>).

A lot has happened in the six years since the last interview - the economy went to hell, funding for the arts has been under attack, we stopped printing our paper and became an electronic publication, and we got a new President. And, a lot of things have stayed the same.

So in our 25th year of covering the visual arts in the Carolinas, first in Charleston, SC, then the State of South Carolina, and finally in 1997, both North and South Carolina - it's time for the third interview to take its place in an issue of *Carolina Arts*.

Q: Are you a little surprised that we are doing this for a third time, considering the bridges you burned in the first two interviews?

A: The biggest surprise is that they still

couldn't find anyone better than you to do this. Or, were you referring to the fact that we have made it through 25 years of publishing an arts newspaper?

Q: I see we are going to have the same banter of the first two interviews.

A: Smart-ass questions deserve smart-ass answers. And, in response to your first one - yes, I am surprised that no one has replaced us in covering the visual arts in the Carolinas. Some have tried or think they will, but they have a rude lesson to learn. And I'm happy to let them learn it.

The main problem is that there is not enough profit in covering the visual arts in the Carolinas while we are still in business and in 25 years we've learned to deal with that reality. And, yes, I'm surprised we made it through the last six years - which have been a nightmare of change - a changing market, a changing medium, change, change, change.

Q: I take it you don't like change?

A: I hate all change unless it is easy and benefits me. Who likes change that is bad? We've had enough of that in the last six years. If someone told me I had to change the font we use in the paper - I'd hate that, just for the sake that it is a change of what I'm used to, but if they said it would double our readership and be as easy as resetting something on my computer - I still would fight it, but eventually would embrace it, but I wouldn't like it. Firstly because if it was that easy to double readership by changing a font - that would make me feel stupid for not doing it long ago. Secondly, because it didn't take that much effort to change for the better. But, not all change is that easy.

Q: So what changes have been good?

A: Well, the big change of not printing the paper and going online with an electronic version of the paper was hard, but it turned out to be the best change we ever made - next to starting out years ago picking Apple computers to work on. Our readership has gone from a possible of 10,000 (the amount of papers we printed each month) to an average of 100,000 downloads of the paper each month.

A lot of credit for these downloads go to the people and organizations which help us distribute the paper to their e-mail list and friends and contacts. They help

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spread the paper beyond our reach.

Not printing the paper has saved a lot of trees, landfill space, and money. Although entering our third year online, we are still paying off our printer for previous printings of the paper before 2010. We are also saving a lot on transportation costs, but I feel a little cut off from the art community we cover by not delivering papers to it every month. And, the time spent delivering that paper was consumed in more time spent on the computer covering more areas of the Carolinas. We're operating a lot more green than before and that's good for the environment.

We are also able to publish the entire paper in full color versus a color cover and the rest in black & white or in the end just black & white like we started. I never liked covering the visual arts in black & white. The paper also has active links in it so that readers looking at ads can click and go to the advertiser's website or click a link from an article and go to a website.

Our ad rates also went down while the size of the paper stayed the same. This was good for the art community as a whole considering the decline of the economy and arts funding in the last six years.

Q: So what changes were bad?

A: All of them. Like I said I don't like change. The biggest complaint we have comes from people still stuck in the 20th century. They say they like to hold a paper in their hands to read it. They say they have trouble downloading the paper which takes less than a minute on most modern computers with any decent internet service - other than dial up. And, now they say there is too much to read.

Most of these complaints are really about people not being able to deal with technology. I understand, I feel their pain - I'm one of those people. I have to be dragged kicking and screaming to try something new. Linda, my better half, is an adventurous explorer when it comes to the computer. She enjoys telling me of things she discovers that can really make a difference and I have to be embarrassed into trying them - which often turn out to be really cool things - real time savers. I hate it when she does that, but I also love the new tricks. They're amazing.

So these folks who have a hard time adjusting to the new technologies - I know what they're going through, but they are going to be left behind as the world changes - if they don't change. Besides holding an iPad or any of the new tablets in your hands is a great way to read any book, magazine or newspaper.

Look, some of these folks who ask where they can get a printed copy make the mistake of saying they used to pick it up at some gallery or art space, but in the last few months it's been hard for them to get by these places. We haven't printed the paper in two years. These are not regular readers we need to be concerned with - apparently they didn't read it that often to begin with.

The other change that is bad for me is the fact that doing this new paper and all the components that go with it - our three blogs, Facebook and now Twitter - has me chained to my computer. We're providing more information than we would have ever dreamed of in a timely fashion - sometimes within minutes of receiving info from someone on the blogs and Facebook, but it all takes a lot of time to process. And, we are now covering all areas of the Carolinas that we hear from when we used to only cover areas where we got advertising support.

Now that's a policy I'm still wrestling with. Ever since we began we have fought against being just another "you pay, you play" publication. You know what I'm talking about - a publication which only includes info about the people who buy ads. I've always felt that by including everyone, it makes the paper more interesting and informative. When we were printing the paper and delivering it we had to restrict our coverage to areas where we received advertising support and areas near those places. We did include everyone who sent us info on our website once we launched it in 1999.

When we went totally online and didn't

have to print the paper or deliver it, we decided to include everyone the same, but as the amount of info increases we find ourselves doing a lot of work including areas (some very large areas) with little or no support coming from those areas. When it gets to the point that we can't handle it all at the expense of those who do support us - we may have to make some cuts of those areas. And, that day may be getting closer and closer.

You see, there are a lot of folks who think the media has to cover them as a service to their readers or at least that's what they hope. They think that by sending the media a press release and saying, "Thanks in advance for helping us spread the word on this important event," is all they need to do.

Q: I hear and read you asking people to send you info all the time. Is that just a ploy to get them to eventually advertise with you?

A: I know it's the stupidest thing I do. I want to cover everything and do encourage people to send us info about their exhibits - that's the focus of the paper - exhibitions taking place in the Carolinas - commercial and non-profit. It's my Catch-22 (Google it folks).

I want *Carolina Arts* to offer the most informative and inclusive coverage of the visual arts in the Carolinas, (which we do already - but we want more) but time is limited and we are a business. We can't do it all for free - all the time.

Q: So you do hope people who are sending you info will advertise or as you would put it - support the paper.

A: You will never get a cold call from us asking you to advertise. We have no advertising sales staff. Yes, we hope the light bulb will eventually go off in peoples' heads when they tell us how we are providing such a wonderful service to the community - that they will one day support us with advertising. They could just send us piles of money, but I'm not holding my breath. Advertising gives you something for your money. Each month we send out an e-mail to those who have advertised with us if they want to again. Eventually people are taken off if we don't hear from them again.

As far as the time factor goes, here's the deal. I can process a well written press release in minutes and prepare an image sent in a few more and it's ready to be placed in the paper. After 25 years you get a system down pat. What takes time is when people send you a mess that is incomplete and you have to go back and forth collecting the info they should have sent to begin with. Some articles take weeks to process. I don't mind that when it comes to supporters, but it's a pain when it's coming from folks who are not. And they seem to always be the most time consuming ones.

We expect more from people who are being paid to do this - it's their job, but we are often disappointed, and we cut those who are beginners some slack, but eventually expect them to catch on, but you'd be amazed at how little people can remember from month to month - year after year. And then there are those special few who actually read the paper, study it and deliver their press releases exactly the way I would have processed it. Folks, their stuff goes in the paper first and is always in the best spots - if there is such a thing.

But getting people to send us info about their exhibits is the frustration that never seems to change. It's the biggest problem in the visual art community - a lack of communicating and when they do - a lack of knowing how to do it in a professional and timely way. And that goes across the board - commercial galleries, non-profit art spaces and art museums. Some of the worst are colleges and universities - which have better resources at hand to do this job.

Q: I can tell you are tired of this subject by the look you are giving me. How did you like the *Hobbit*?

A: You are a hobbit.

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