

Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

Number 2 - 51 Pages

Well, here we are with issue #2 of the new *Carolina Arts*. It seems like the blink of an eye since we launched the last issue for Jan. 1, but I want to remind folks who plan on sending us info for our March 2011 issue. We'll be working with a short month in February - so get us your info early. Info received close to or at our deadline on Feb. 24 may find itself located in very strange places.

By the Numbers

So how did that first issue do? Well, that's a little subjective, but we've heard a lot of rave reviews from those who loved the new colorful electronic version of the paper and very little from folks who may be still looking to find a copy of our non-existent "printed" version of our Jan. issue.

And, that's our perpetual conundrum. How do we know what's happened with those folks who are not so oriented towards using electronic media? We have no way of reaching them and they may have no idea that we are still publishing, but publishing beyond their reach. Although anyone can go to any public library and get access to a computer, the Internet, and then to us. Hopefully, someday they will figure that out and find us.

So who is reading our new online version of the paper? Here's one solid bit of information. There were at least 9,000 visitors to our website who downloaded the complete PDF of the Jan. 2011 issue. We'll know exact numbers later.

Before Jan. we printed 10,000 copies of the paper and distributed 90-95% of those papers throughout areas of the Carolinas. Some months they all got distributed. So, for a first time experience

and during an unexpected, very chaotic process - I'd say that was a pretty good beginning. As far as being able to answer advertiser's questions about how many people saw their ad and benefited them in a positive way, I don't have those answers.

I ask all for patience. This is all new to us. We hope to make improvements each month, and we think all factors will grow with time.

In respects to those 9,000 downloads, we know that many more people just looked at the paper in their browsers while others looked at individual pages. What was really frustrating was the fact that thousands of folks pulled up pages from our online Dec. 2010 issue. These are pages people had bookmarked on their computers. By mid-month we made adjustments to let these folks know they need to go to our new front page and bookmark that page to get our updated info.

New Supporters

One of the encouraging signs which took place between these two issues is the fact that we picked up new supporters and new viewers from areas that were not served by the printed paper.

One example of that is the explosive response we received from the visual art community in Florence, SC - an area often ignored by statewide media covering the arts in South Carolina. We reached out and they reached right back. We reported a lot of new info we were receiving on our blog - *Carolina Arts Unleashed* and in this issue we have two pages of ads and info about exhibits taking place in Florence. And, in response to all that interest and the fact that we received a flood of images for that blog coverage - we highlighted one of those exhibits on our cover.

This is just one of the benefits of our

new online version of the paper - lower ad rates and equal coverage and distribution of the paper. Everyone has the same access to the same one copy of the paper we are producing. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, not all folks have that same access or want that kind of access. But, hopefully we'll have this same kind of experience all over the Carolinas.

Economic Outlook

The big question of the year will be - are things getting better? Some say they are and at the same time galleries are still closing. It is definitely a challenging time for all - especially those in state and local governments trying to balance budgets.

By the time you are reading this the stock market may have gone over the 12,000 mark. Apple may have sold a few million more iPhones to Verizon customers, but we'll still have a huge debt here at *Carolina Arts* and the Governor of SC will be hoping to eliminate the budget of the SC Arts Commission. You're going to be hearing a lot about that latter issue, but not from me.

I know a lot of regular readers of my editorial commentary are hoping I'm going to be a major cheerleader for our Governor, but I've got better things to do. We have to survive our own economic troubles ourselves. And, mostly I think it's a lot of smoke and mirrors - like pledges to cut taxes while major budget deficits are looming. You'll hear enough about this issue from the Arts Commission and their friends (the people who receive money from them) that if this agency was eliminated - all art as we know it will stop and disappear. That's not true.

Last Words

I want to leave you with some wise words I saw recently from one of America's most successful businessmen.

"A man who stops advertising to save money - is like a man who stops his clock to save time." - Henry Ford

See you in the blogs.

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E-mail at: (info@carolinaarts.com) and on the web at: (www.CarolinaArts.com).

Editor/Publisher/Calendars/Distribution
Thomas J. Starland

Web Master/Advertising/Business Manager
Linda Parks Starland

Blog Guru & Graphics
Zelda Ravenel

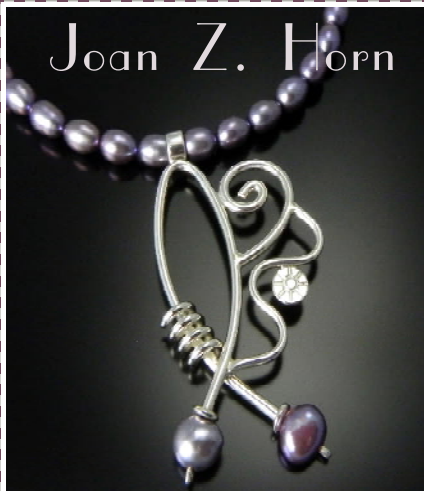
Proofreader
Andrew A. Starland

Contributing Writers This Month
Judith McGrath

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