

Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

ArtFields© 2016

ArtFields© 2016 has ended its forth entry into making Lake City, SC, an arts destination. How's that going? Well, it's a little hard to tell as I'm writing some of this before the event starts this year and I'll be adding to it while it's going on. ArtFields© offers a challenge to us in that it takes place while we're putting our May 2016 issue together to be launched by the evening ArtFields© will be ending. Much the same problem we had with Spoleto Festival USA - before they decided to stop offering visual arts.

This year I made a preview visit to Lake City and got to see a lot of what was going to be presented. I also talked with Hannah Davis, the newly appointed director of ArtFields© - just a few months into that job.

A lot of plans were locked in before she took this monumental job, but I already knew from many conversations with Davis over the years that ArtFields© is on the right path - finally being directed by someone who knows the visual arts and has dealt with many artists. I'm really looking forward to some positive changes as Davis has control of a full year's worth of planning. That's if she's given the support she needs by those who control the money and web of organizations that seem to be making all these changes in Lake City.

And, I'm hoping people involved in the arts and artists will give her their two cents worth. Tell her what you'd like to see changed or improved on. Not all suggestions will work out, but it doesn't hurt to let people know what would keep you coming back to ArtFields© and Lake City - over and over again.

I'll have more to say once it all settles in. ArtFields© is an all year project for *Carolina Arts*.

But I can say this - I fully expect that next year will be the first year that the people on the jury panels don't come from any of the 12 participating states. New York City, Chicago and LA can provide plenty of qualified people to participate on those panels. I feel that will help in attracting more entries, not only from the Carolinas but many more from the other 10 states.

I know some of my favorite works that I voted for have been by artists from those other states this year.

More visitors are registering to vote - which I hope will lead to more people voting and we hope to help do something about that next year - giving voters an opportunity to win some artworks for making the effort. More about that later.

ArtFields© Matters

One of the most encouraging things about ArtFields© is that its becoming a fixture of the visual art community. In talking with an artist who had recently participated in the Columbia Open Studios in Columbia, SC, they told me part of their display included their entry that got accepted into this year's competition and when people asked about it they were impressed. Making the cut in a competition that involved artists from 12 Southeastern states was an achievement to these visitors giving the artist a bit of pride and letting the artist know that ArtFields© mattered to them.

That's a sign that ArtFields© is making an impact and is headed in the right direction. It has a long way to go yet on this journey to make Lake City, SC, an art destination, but its moving along.

North Carolina HB2

I heard from a few folks asking if I was

going to boycott North Carolina over the HB2 law passed recently. Mostly from people outside the Carolinas. I said no - not because I don't think it was one of the most stupid things NC lawmakers have done recently, but because the last thing the arts in North Carolina needs is a boycott of the arts - especially the visual arts.

It's bad enough that if they don't change that law soon, the good folks in South Carolina will be trying to get all those good things that were going to NC to come to SC instead - like concerts, the film industry, high tech development and whatever else they can talk people into bringing here instead of there. Of course a few of our lawmakers wanted to jump on the hateful bandwagon, but our Governor, who is still looking to get a political appointment outside of SC - cut that idea off at the gate.

Out state slogan might change from, "It's a Great Day in South Carolina!" to "Hey - It's a Great Day to Change Your Mind and Come to South Carolina!"

A Few Words From Down Under

In our offering of a past commentary by Judith McGrath, from way back in August 2007, she discusses the problem of how some galleries miss the opportunity to engage visitors who come into their gallery spaces. Not all galleries act this way, but way too many do.

From my own personal experience I know how hard it is to sit in a gallery day after day, waiting for people to come in, listening to the same questions over and over, and trying to engage some folks who just don't want to be engaged. But, on the other hand, there were many occasions when I was delivering copies of our publication, back in the day when it was printed, that I could enter a gallery and no one came to the front to see who it was. I could have walked out with a work of art that would take days if not weeks for some folks to notice. I never did, but I'm sure I could have.

The point is - as gallery owners or

gallery staff - someone walking through your gallery's door is an opportunity to not only sell, but to educate and give them a reason to return.

Not Speaking of Spoleto Festival USA

As most of you know - at least those who read my commentary over the years about the Spoleto Festival that takes place every May/June in Charleston, SC, - it's not a visual art thing anymore. We can only look to the City of Charleston's Piccolo Spoleto Festival for visual art offerings, which include the outdoor crafts shows at Wragg Square, the outdoor art show in Marion Square featuring SC artists, and the juried art show at the Joe Riley Gallery at Waterfront Park On the Cooper River Flowing into the Atlantic Ocean or whatever its name is now.

The visual arts always seem to be a point of controversy in Charleston. Spoleto Festival USA lost its founder over the visual arts getting too much attention, the City of Charleston spends \$150 million redoing a performance space and next to nothing on visual art venues, and the *Post & Courier* publishes a book about the 40 year history of Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston and forgets to mention that it used to present visual arts too.

We were suppose to do a review of that book, but after looking through a digital copy and finding no mention of the visual arts I had to inform them that we don't do reviews of books about the performing arts. Of course this wasn't the first time the *P&C* only told part of a story.

Frankly, we didn't receive any info from the Piccolo Spoleto Festival by our deadline, so we don't have much info on the visual arts component. We have some info sent to us, by deadline, from some of the individual venues, but nothing from the Festival office. They don't seem to have any problems getting us info about their call for entries - I guess because there is always a fee involved for people to enter their juried shows. They can get you info about stuff that generates income.



Sunny Marsh

oil

40 x 30 inches

Roger Dale Brown

Exhibit Opens Friday,
May 6th, 2016



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