

Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

Summer Has Arrived

How can you tell? Well if the heat didn't give you a clue, *Carolina Arts* has gone from 80 pages in May to 60 pages in June. Some of this shrinkage is due to the fact that many colleges, universities, and arts groups tend to take the Summer months off. Many other institutions plan exhibits to last all Summer long. So those we reported on in May won't offer something new until August or September. And, many folks get a case of the Summertime blues and just forget to send us their info in time for our deadline - if they even made it that far. I have to admit that being stuck to my computer while others are out doing things is no picnic.

So be assured that there is much more going on in the Carolina visual art community than what you will be reading about in this issue. And, our 60 pages offers plenty to do and see.

ArtFields

Well, the folks who head up ArtFields in Lake City, SC, have gone silent again after their event ends. I know an effort like that can wear a person out, but it's now been a month and they've said nothing about how their second effort went. They announced the winners and then just went silent. I don't get it.

They have put out a few slick videos about the event, but other than that, very little chatter on their social networks and few media outlets have mentioned the event.

As soon as the event finished was the time to take advantage of the opportunity to tell people what they missed, give artists a reason to enter again or for the first time.

Now, other Summer art events are taking the headlines, like the Spoleto and Pico Spoleto Festivals in Charleston, SC.

Well, I guess we'll eventually hear how the event went. I just hope they aren't getting hung up with the numbers.

I knew another art event that got all wrapped up in numbers. When the Spoleto Festival USA was searching for money from the SC Legislature, they put out a report that said they were attracting 100,000 people to Charleston and South Carolina, making a huge economic impact. Soon the media picked up on those figures, as they tend to do. Whenever the name Spoleto Festival was mentioned the 100,000 number would follow. But it didn't make sense.

So one day, being the doubting Thomas I am, I called the Spoleto Box Office and asked how many tickets they sell on average and they told me a top end would be 60,000 - a bit short of the 100,000 mark. Spoleto doesn't offer any free events and figuring that many locals go to Spoleto events, the fact that few people only see one event, and hotels never seemed to be full, I came up with a generous figure that Spoleto, at best, could only be attracting 30,000 outsiders to Charleston. And to this day, I figure most of those folks come from the region - Charlotte, Atlanta, and other parts of South Carolina.

Today's updated phrase is that 60,000 - 70,000 attend Spoleto, which is more reflective of their ticket sales. Does it really matter that those other 40,000 never showed up. No! And I don't think Charleston could handle them if they did.

There was a time when Spoleto offered free outdoor visual art events, but those days are long past. With a free event it is very hard to tell who came for the specific event and how many people just happened

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to be passing by. But people in Charleston would know if there were 100,000 extra people on the streets, as it would shut the city down.

Spoleto starts every year along with the Memorial Day weekend for a good reason - Charleston will be packed that weekend. Are all the people there for Spoleto? No, but it looks good to anyone who is there for Spoleto - especially those folks from whom they receive funding. They wouldn't think of starting a week earlier or a week later.

So in regards to the folks in Lake City - don't get all wrapped up in the numbers that become more important than your overall goal of bringing more people into Lake City. If the organizers are happy with the results (in just two years) and the merchants are happy with the results - what does it matter to anyone else?

If you're looking for outside funding, then you are competing in a world that is used to over-bloating the numbers and the folks reading them don't believe them anymore - so why not just let them be what they are. Whatever they are - they are most likely better than before nothing was being done.

But, you need to push ArtFields all year long.

Single Page vs. Side by Side Pages

Last month Linda, the technical side of *Carolina Arts*, offered the May issue in a side by side format. We quickly heard from some folks that they liked the old single page format better. So we posted a link on our website for that version of the paper. Starting this month we will offer you the choice of both formats.

There are still a few folks out there who keep asking us where they can pick up a printed version of the paper, which isn't going to happen any time soon - unless I win the lottery and in order to do that they say I have to buy a ticket. That doesn't sound like a good deal to me.

Some of these folks are convinced that they just got a printed version a few months ago - they just can't remember

where. The fact that we're into our fourth year of not printing the paper makes me wonder how regularly these folks read our printed version. No problem - time is on our side. Eventually these folks will learn how to deal with online publishing or just have to give up a lot, and soon young folks will be asking us - "You used to print the paper - why? Who does that anymore?"

Some folks would like us to just go totally virtual - publishing every day. With just the two of us that's not possible either. As is, I spend a lot of my time, almost every day, posting info at *Carolina Arts News*, where we offer late breaking news, news that's late, and news we think you need to know at

(<http://carolinaartsnews.wordpress.com/>). Here you'll find news about fundraisers, calls for entries, calls for submissions, staff changes to organizations, results of juried shows, news about artists, news about galleries, and news about art institutions. It's amazing how much stuff flows to us that has nothing to do about visual art exhibitions.

And then there is Facebook and Twitter. To me, Twitter is just a place to retweet other people's info and Facebook - don't get me started. Let's just say I have a tolerant - hate relationship with Facebook.

Don't get me wrong - I find Facebook useful, but at the same time totally a pain the rear and constantly in flux. People on Facebook are being used without any input on how it operates. It's free so what can we say?

Just Keep Marching On

Next month we will enter our 28th year of bringing folks info about the visual arts. It's been a ride of ups and downs, but a good ride and never a boring ride. What have we learned in the last 27 years? You don't want to know. We prefer for folks to hold on to their illusions about the arts. I can tell you this. Most artists produce a product that is for sale. They hope people will want to buy what they produce. Some sell their work individually and some sell in retail outlets. The arts are an industry.

William Berra



Summer Clouds

Oil on Metal Leaf

9 x 12 inches


THE SYLVAN GALLERY
171 King St. • Charleston • SC • 29401


CFADA

For additional information
843•722•2172
www.thesylvangallery.com