

Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

Another Thing About ArtFields

I read a quote from ArtFields that appeared in the *Charleston City Paper* on 4/9/18 saying, "The 2018 event will unveil what will be the largest art venue in the entire state of South Carolina: the TRAX Visual Arts Center, also known as TRAX-vac - a 5,000 sq. ft. facility." That's a bold lie. It was repeated in the 4/14/18 article in the *Florence Morning News*. I wonder if the reporters or editors of these publications rolled their eyes on hearing such a boast - considering the size of the Florence County Museum, or the Gibbes Museum of Art, or any other major art venue in SC. The SC State Museum has several floors of at least 5,000 sq. ft. Much like the Trump administration, ArtFields thinks repeating a lie over and over makes a lie a fact.

Another boast in that *Florence Morning News* article was, "Wim Roefs and ArtFields team members are confident that the quality of art present in this year's competition has taken another leap forward. Roefs, the artistic director for the Lake City Creative Alliance, said ArtFields has rapidly become one of the South's most prominent art events."

Since when do the people who are paid to put on an event get to judge how good it is? Well, I guess they do that in Lake City. Roefs is also one of a few people in SC who has the most conflicts of interest in that he has a commercial gallery in Columbia, runs 701 Center for Contemporary Art and runs the Columbia Open Studio Tour through the 701 Center. Want to guess how many artists he represents have works in this exhibit?

I looked through the 22 pages of artworks on display which was launched on the ArtFields' website just days before the event opened and I didn't see the "leap

forward" Roefs and the staff are boasting about. What I did see is a group of pretty much the same artists who enter every year, some presenting some works that were almost duplicates of works entered before, works catered to the Florence and Lake City area audience which are the bulk of voters in the competition, and except for a few works - I didn't see much that would draw me to Lake City to see something I haven't seen before.

In looking through the entries not much has changed, most of the entries are from artists living in SC (55%), NC, and GA. The artists in the other nine states who could enter are still not interested in entering this competition even with a \$50,000 carrot, and if I was an artist from one of those states, I wouldn't be interested in entering either as most of the votes will be going to locally known artists. Many from other areas of SC, far from the Pee Dee area, have already learned this lesson and have stopped entering this competition.

And, if ArtFields has, "become one of the South's most prominent art events", I can't wait to read all the write ups about it in the major newspapers and arts publications around the Southeast - not in Florence, Lake City or the *Charleston City Paper*, repeating quotes from people on ArtFields' paid staff.

I just hope that not too many of the winners are artists represented by Roefs in his enterprises in Columbia. That would really look bad. But I guess the organizers of ArtFields didn't think of that, but what's new about that?

I'm still left with getting over the fact that I was once one of the biggest cheerleaders for this event. I was hopeful that it would turn into a major event, but was proven wrong at every misstep. I guess it proves money can't buy everything.

Annual North Charleston Arts Fest Which Takes Place Throughout North Charleston, SC, Takes Place - May 2 - 6

The 36th annual North Charleston Arts Fest is set to take place May 2-6, 2018, throughout the City of North Charleston, SC. The celebration of arts and culture highlights the talents of national, regional, and local artists and performers in the areas of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, media arts, and literature. Performances, activities, and exhibits are scheduled to take place in a variety of venues throughout the city of North Charleston, including libraries, community centers, businesses, and parks. Many of the offerings are free, and those that are ticketed are moderately priced.

Recognized by the Southeast Tourism Society as a Top 20 Event in both 2008 and 2018, the North Charleston Arts Fest is now entering its 36th year. The City of North Charleston Cultural Arts Department, which organizes and presents the event, is continuing with revisions set into motion in 2017 and also adding some exciting new programming. "From humble beginnings as a one-day community celebration at Park Circle, the festival has developed into one of our most anticipated annual City events," says North Charleston Mayor, Keith Summey. "The Cultural Arts staff and their partners have worked hard to produce a festival that uses performing, visual, media, and literary arts to expose, engage, and inspire residents and visitors from all walks of life."

Arts Fest offerings include concerts ranging from classical to contemporary, theatre presentations, children's programs, film screenings, workshops and demonstrations, lectures, exhibitions, receptions, public art installations, and more.

Theatre offerings during this year's Arts Fest vary from short play showcases to Broadway musicals. South of Broadway Theatre will once again present their annual PlayFest as part of the Arts Fest Page 4 - Carolina Arts, May 2018




"Atlantic Sun" by Hamed Mahmoodi, the Poster Design Winner for the 2018 North Charleston Arts Fest.

schedule. The two-night event, set for May 4 & 5, features a variety of new short plays by local playwrights. Lady in White Productions will offer a one-night-only performance of *When I First Remember*, on Saturday, May 5. The interactive, storytelling journey portrays the passage of African slaves to the Lowcountry and provides unique and authentic insight into the Gullah Geechee and African American culture. Arts Fest patrons can also catch Midtown Productions' take on Neil Simon's *Broadway Bound*, with 9 presentations taking place between Apr. 27 and May 12.

New to the Arts Fest event line-up this year is the Arts Fest Marsh Jam taking place at The Bend on Thursday, May 3. The free, outdoor event is headlined by Big Mean Sound Machine (Ithaca, NY) and also features roving performers, kid's

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activities, live art demonstrations, food trucks, and a local beer garden.

On the following evening, Friday, May 4, is the second annual Arty Block Party, a free, family-friendly celebration that combines an art market and street dance in the Olde Village area of North Charleston on East Montague Avenue. This year's Arty Block Party features live music by The Zandrina Dunning Experience (Charleston, SC) and Swift Technique (Philadelphia, PA), along with a variety of art-based vendors, a kid's zone with hands-on activities and inflatables, and more.

Another highlight in the 2018 schedule is the Art Fest's first ever stand-alone hip-hop event, Live in Color, taking place at the Purple Buffalo on Saturday, May 5. Produced in partnership with Charleston Sticks Together, Live in Color features DJs, live hip-hop performances, and an adult coloring contest.

The Arts Fest Expo at the Charleston Area Convention Center is considered the festival's flagship event, presented as the culmination of the week's festivities on Saturday and Sunday, May 5 & 6, from 11am-5pm each day. The Arts Fest Expo features free admission and parking to a diverse array of performances on four stages; exhibitions of fine art, fine craft, photography, and youth art; live art demonstrations; hands-on children's activities; art & craft vendors; roving entertainers; and more.



Fiber Art by Jan Hollins

Visual art offerings unique to this year's festival include *Honduras: Nuestro Arte, Nuestra Vida*, an international group exhibition featuring painters from



Sculpture by Beau Lyday

Honduras; *False Dichotomy*, an immersive art installation by local artists Sage Graham and Heather Thornton; and *CREST*, a solo display of new work by the City of North Charleston's current artist-in-residence Camela Guevara. Other visual art exhibitions include the *17th Annual South Carolina Palmetto Hand Juried Fine Craft Exhibition* featured in Exhibit Hall A of the Charleston Area Convention Center as a component of the Arts Fest Expo, the *13th Annual National Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition* installed at North Charleston Riverfront Park, and the *12th Annual African American Fiber Art Exhibition: I'm NOT Every Woman, I'm a PHENOMENAL Woman!* on display at North Charleston City Hall.

In addition, the North Charleston Cultural Arts Department is continuing its partnership with the College of Charleston School of the Arts Sculpture Department to present public art installations in green spaces throughout the City. These installations, as well as a number of the exhibitions presented as components of the festival, will remain on view well after the festival concludes on May 6.

Complete information on all 2018 North Charleston Arts Fest offerings, including event and exhibition details, site maps, and social media contest rules, are available at NorthCharlestonArtsFest.com.

Want to be in the next issue? You can contact us by calling 843/693-1306 or by e-mail at info@carolinaarts.com but do it before May 24th or you might be left out.