

Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

ArtFields Results

The results are in for the ArtFields visual art competition, held in Lake City, SC - if you haven't heard already:

ArtFields \$50,000 Top Prize! - James Arendt of Conway, SC.

Juried Panel \$25,000 Prize! - Leanna Knapp of Juliette, GA.

People's Choice \$10,000 Prize - John Cooper of Kith and Kin, NC

Although many artists - if they heard about this opportunity at all - are still thinking that what they saw or heard was a typo or miss-information. It couldn't have been a \$100,000 in cash prizes and it couldn't be taking place in Lake City, SC. Those people missed a great opportunity and a great event. Learn more at (www.artfieldssc.org).

The organizers of this event and the people of Lake City did a great job presenting this event for the first time, although there are problems to be worked out before next year. I'll offer my 2 cents on those problems on our blog *Carolina Arts Unleashed* found at (<http://carolinaarts.com/wordpress/>) in a few days. But for now it's a job well done.

I went to Lake City twice, but still couldn't see all the art offered - as usual I spent way too much time talking with people I met there.

Lake City will be a model on how to revitalize a dying town by offering arts as a cultural draw for development. This is no secret in North Carolina, but it's still a "crazy" concept to most of SC's political leaders.

My big question about this event was

what will someone see in Lake City the day after the festival, a month after the festival or before the 2014 festival? I'm not sure yet what that answer will be and before I went to Lake City my answer was - probably not much, but I learned more in 5 minutes talking with Ray McBride, Executive Director of the Community Museum Society than I heard in two years of marketing this event.

McBride was manning the Jones & Carter Building which was one of the venues during ArtFields. This building will be a permanent space presenting exhibitions on art, agriculture, and history. Along with the ArtFields Gallery at the ArtFields Office on Main Street visitors will have at least two venues to draw visitors to Lake City. And if plans continue to develop, it won't be long before a commercial gallery might pop up in Lake City. Still a risky proposition, but as the Lake City community is exposed to these art events, demand will grow for more home-grown offerings.

So, will the Pee Dee area of South Carolina be the next area of the state to offer cultural tourism - from within and outside the state? I don't know, but I do see folks there working hard to make it so.

Just 20 miles east of Lake City, Johnsonville, SC, will dedicate a larger than life statue of General Francis Marion by Florence, SC, artist Alex Palkovich, at 1pm on Saturday, May 18, 2013, at Venters Landing on the Lynches River. The event is part of the City's Heritage Festival.

If little steps like this keep happening, it won't be long before people can travel along a cultural and heritage trail throughout the Pee Dee - instead of traveling up and down I-26.

I'm glad it's just 52 miles up Hwy. 52

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for me to drive to the Hub at ArtFields. I look forward to many more trips there to see how this development takes place.

Lack of Info on Piccolo Spoleto Festival Visual Art Offerings

We don't have much info on visual art offering taking place during the Piccolo Spoleto Festival in Charleston, SC. We didn't receive any by deadline or after it passed. As usual the City of Charleston's Office of Cultural Affairs couldn't send out a press release a month or so before the event happens. At least they didn't send any to us. So, if they are trying to keep us in the dark - they're doing a good job of it. The only problem with that is that they are also keeping our readers in the dark too.

You Say Goodbye, I Say Hello

The Beatles sang that song back in 1968 - was it about change? Were they talking about when one door closes another door opens? Heck, I don't know, but it sounds right for one of our long time supporters - The Pink House Gallery in Charleston, SC. They have been one of our steady supporters - way back when we were *Charleston Arts* in the late 1980's.

The artists/owners of that gallery had to close their doors back in mid-April, not because they had a failing business, but because the owner of the building wanted to sell it as a residence.

I've talked with one of those artists about the future and they, much like *Carolina Arts*, may come back as an e-gallery. It's a challenging transition, but one that can be successful. We'll help you say "Hello" or "Goodbye" when we hear what they work out.

Our Covers

The last couple of months, starting with our cover with works by Peter Scala of North Charleston, SC, we've seen a growth spurt in downloads and views on Facebook. I always think our covers are

attractive, but something changed back in March. And, after Scala helped us blaze a trail into new territories - Jane Filer's (Chapel Hill, NC) cover in April zoomed us to new highs.

Our April 2013 issue broke a new record for downloads from a high of 175,150 for our October 2012 issue by reaching a mark of 178,607 as of Apr. 28. Just a year ago our April 2012 issue saw 112,795 downloads, which was a record.

Now Facebook has to be given some credit for these new highs. I'm glad I'm finally seeing some rewards to being on Facebook and swimming through hundreds and hundreds of posting made each day - sometimes each hour.

Back in March when we posted the notice that the Mar. 2013 issue was ready to be downloaded on Facebook, which was Peter Scala's cover - we saw a big jump in views of that post, from an average of 250-300 per view, to a record 2,410 views with 30 shares for that post. And postings after that got a bump averaging 400-600 views.

In April, the post on Facebook that our Apr. 2013 issue was ready to be downloaded soared to 3,691 views and 45 shares. And several postings after that reached the 1,000 mark.

We can't thank those folks who share our postings enough - they help the paper to be seen by more and more people all the time.

We've got another great cover of works by Enid Williams (Upstate SC) for our May issue, but we want everyone to know - this growth can't go on forever. - at least we don't expect it to. There are always peaks and valleys in this process.

The good thing is - there are still lots of people out there in the Carolinas who have never heard of *Carolina Arts*. There are even lots of visual artists who have never heard of us.

Did you ever think you'd hear a publisher of a newspaper think of that as good news? It's better than knowing that everyone knows about us but only 178,000 showed up to take a look at us. Now how about 200,000?



Morning Has Broken

Oil on canvas

12 x 12 inches

Rhett Thurman



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