# Area arts festival tops in nation

## Artisphere takes 7th place in Art Fair Sourcebook

**By Paul Hyde**
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Artisphere once again was named one of the Top 10 arts festivals in the nation.

Greenville's big annual celebration of the visual arts placed No. 7 in Greg Lawler's Art Fair Sourcebook, a respected resource for artists and patrons.

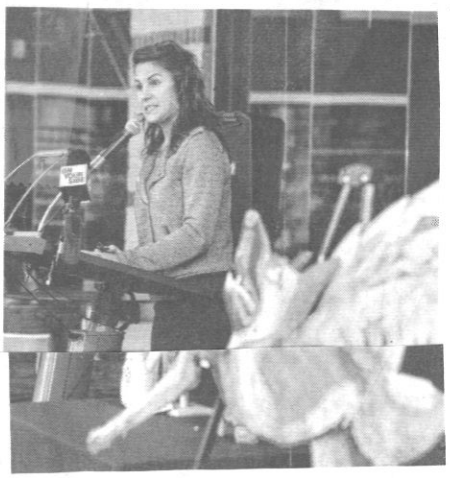
The outdoor festival, which brings tens of thousands of people to downtown Greenville, also set records for artists' sales last year.

Artisphere retained its top spot among 600 similar arts events ranked by the Art Fair Sourcebook, said Artisphere director Kerry Murphy.

"We've come an amazingly long way in a short period of time," Murphy said, speaking at a press conference on Monday.

This year's Artisphere takes place May 8-10. In addition to art in a variety of media, the festival features food, music, street performances and activities for children.

Artisphere, only 11 years old, shares accolades in the Art Fair Sourcebook with esteemed company: well-established arts festivals in much-larger cities such as Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, St. Louis and Portland.



BART BOATWRIGHT/STAFF/

**Art made by 2015 Artisphere artists was on display during a Monday press conference announcing the 2015 event.**

"To be a Top 10 show in the country and in the company of such cities as Chicago, Portland and Philadelphia is a testament to what a gem this annual event has become not only for Greenville's art community, but exhibiting artists across the country," said Charlie Mickel, board president of Artisphere.

Artists' sales in 2014 over the three days of Artisphere were an average of $7,366, a considerable increase over average sales of $6,500 in 2013, Murphy said.

In all, the 125 artists last year saw sales of $920,750.

As another sign of its growing prestige, Artisphere received more artist applications than ever this year, 995, compared to last year's 934 applications.

"We had a fantastic pool of applicants to choose from," Murphy said.

In its first year, 2005, Artisphere received only 282 applications and average sales were $2,400.

An ever-increasing number of artist applications allows Artisphere to maintain high artistic standards and showcase a diverse group of artists at the event.

Of the 995 applicants, 121 were chosen to exhibit their works in the event's central attraction, Artists' Row.

"We have never had a group of artists as impressive as those lined up for this year," said Bill Pelham, chair of Artisphere's Visual Arts Committee. "The caliber of creativity and artistry that the 2015 exhibiting artists represent is absolutely incredible."

Forty-three of the 121 artists are new to the festival.

"That's always exciting," Murphy said. "People love to see familiar faces but new faces as well."

Seventeen of the artists are from the Greenville area, another new record.

The featured artists work in a variety of media: from painting to woodwork to sculpture, jewelry, ceramics and photography.

Sarah Mandell, a Greenville-based artist, will be showing her work, primarily jewelry, at Artisphere for the first time.

"I do a lot of shows, but nothing like this one," Mandell said. "The scale of Artisphere is tremendous."

Jaryd Walley, a former Hollywood prop maker who creates fine-art furniture in his Greenville studio, is returning to Artisphere for the third time. At Artisphere, artists not only sell their works but also build relationships with future clients, Walley said.

"Artisphere is of tremendous marketing value for artists," Walley said.

Artisphere is also big business for Greenville, particularly for downtown, with a $5.5 million economic impact for the community, Murphy said.

David Lominack, TD Bank market president, said events such as Artisphere play a vital role in Greenville's quality of life and contribute substantially to economic development.



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TD Bank is the presenting sponso of Artisphere.

"Events such as this help maintai the attractive quality of life in our com munity, and we are happy to play a par in helping Artisphere continue its grea success in the Upstate and on the na tional stage," Lominack said.

For more information about Ar tisphere, see the websit www.artisphere.us.

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