Greenville News
1/12/10

Artisphere among Top 10 fine arts festivals

Greenville show also recognized by tourism society as can't miss event

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Artisphere, Greenville's Arts Weekend, the popular event that drew 100,000 people to Greenville's historic West End in May, has received a Top 10 ranking in Greg Lawler's "Art Fair Sourcebook" for 2009.

The festival offering a rich selection of works by 100 juried artists placed sixth out of 600 shows in the fine arts category, up from 46th in 2008.

In the contemporary craft category, Artisphere was ranked 12th out of 600, up from 59th in 2008.

The Lawler annually ranks 600 of the top-selling fine arts and crafts festivals across the country based on the net average revenue generated by exhibitors. In 2009, average artist sales at Artisphere were $5,445, while average artist sales at the No. 1 ranking festival in the country, "Art in the Square," in Belleville, Ill., were $7,103.

The 2009 rankings are the highest Artisphere has received in its five-year history. Praise from Artisphere's 2009 participating artists resulted in a record high 682 applications for the 2010 festival, which will be held May 7-9. Additionally, the Southeast Tourism Society recognized Artisphere as an event not to be missed in 2010 honoring the festival with a "Top Twenty Event in the Southeast" designation.

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"The Greenville community is due a lot of credit for this Top 10 ranking because it is about more than just Artisphere," said 2009 Artisphere board chairman Brad Campbell. "It is about our community and our citizens. The arts make a tremendous contribution to our quality of life here. It is a tribute to our community that we supported our arts weekend during difficult economic times. While things like artist hospitality and festival organization make an impact, the bottom line is that we have to thank our patrons."

"Artisphere would not be possible without the initial vision and leadership of our board and tremendous support from our sponsors and donors, the local arts community and our volunteers and patrons," said Henry Horowitz, founding Artisphere board chairman. "Further, the initial and ongoing support by the city, county and state agencies has been invaluable for us to successfully execute this initiative. For Artisphere to be named one of the Top 10 arts festivals in the country over the course of only five years is an amazing accomplishment for Greenville and the entire Upstate community."