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Artisphere begins planning for next year

Good weather, big crowds create perfect atmosphere on Main Street

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The West End remained packed right up to Artisphere's final hour Sunday, fueling hopes that the art festival's sixth year was its largest ever.

Festival executive director Kerry Murphy said she can't see any reason the festival wouldn't return to downtown Greenville for a seventh year in 2011.

Three days of perfect weather helped pack Main Street with art enthusiasts and those just looking for a way to pass the weekend. Crowds found continuous free entertainment, including a drum circle, actors pretending to be statues and a man wading through the crowd on stilts.

It was the most selective year yet for artists, who displayed their work in white tents lining the street. More than 680 artists applied for 120 spots, Murphy said.

Daniel Cvammen of Simpsonville made the cut and said he sold about a dozen pieces in his first year at the festival.

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HEIDI HEILBRUNN / Staff

People look for last-minute purchases as Artisphere wraps up Sunday in downtown Greenville.

ARTS

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"I'll take that as a win," he said.

Organizers will now evaluate how the weekend went to see if any changes ought to be made next year. Murphy said she doesn't expect many.

One of the festival's most popular entertainers, Brian Olsen, will be invited back, she said. In the time it takes to play three or four songs, Olsen used his bare hands to paint large portraits of famous people, including Elvis Presley and Jimi Hendrix.

The festival's crowd estimate broke 100,000 for the first time in 2008 — a milestone matched the following year.

It will take a while for organizers to come up with this year's estimate, but Murphy said it was looking good. Hotels have been slammed, she said, and restaurateurs have told her crowds have been filtering in.

It took about 600 volunteers to put on the festival, Murphy said.

They helped keep artists fed and stocked with bottled water — something not lost on Patricia Crandall, a retired Wade Hampton High art teacher who sold her pictures of the Poinsett Hotel and other Greenville buildings.

"They've been fantastic," she said.

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