

Annual festival succeeds again



CINDY HOSEA / Staff

Crowds of people came out Sunday afternoon for a last chance to browse the artwork on display during the final day of Artisphere.

Artisphere could set record

Organizers hope to beat 100,000 attendance barrier

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Artisphere, a downtown Greenville arts festival, wrapped up its fifth year on Sunday and will be back for a sixth in 2010, the chief organizer said.

Crowds filled South Main Street for three days, taking advantage of sunny skies, warm temperatures and free admis-

sion.

While a crowd count wasn't complete late Sunday, festival Executive Director Kerry Murphy said she hoped to match 2008's record-breaking tally of 100,000.

"We had a bang-up year last year," she said, "and if we can hit that attendance number, I'll be pleased."

The 100 artists who lined the sides of the street sold everything from multi-colored pepper grinders to surreal paintings of whales leaping out of golden prairie grasses.

While several artists

were local, some came from areas as far flung as Texas, Wisconsin and Oregon.

Murphy said that despite the recession, more artists told her this year that they were pleased with sales than last year.

"There might be a little bit of a drop-off, but I think they anticipated a little bit," she said.

Most of the entertainment was free.

Musicians played folk, New Orleans jazz and West African rhythms. A juggler weaved through the crowd on a unicycle that made him about 10

feet tall.

Actors painted head-to-toe in silver or bronze as still as a statues, breaking the pose only to smile dramatically at children.

Brian Olsen returned to Falls Park on the Reedy, where he whipped up paintings of famous people, each taking about 10 minutes.

No changes are yet planned for next year, Murphy said.

Patrons, artists and sponsors will fill out surveys that could give organizers ideas on how to tweak the festival for 2010, she said.