

ARTISPHERE gets new events

By Paul Hyde

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Tens of thousands of Upstate residents are expected to turn out for this year's Artisphere, beginning Friday and running through Sunday, May 13.

Downtown Greenville's big outdoor celebration of the visual arts will feature food, entertainment and an abundance of activities for children.

As always, the centerpiece of the eighth-annual event will be 120 visual artists, carefully selected from among almost 900 applicants nationwide.

"Forty-four of the artists are new to the event, which is always exciting," says Kerry Murphy, Artisphere's executive director. "I think people love to see their favorites come back but they also like to see something new. Our



This year's Artisphere festival will feature 120 visual artists, music, a wine-tasting and more, all along South Main Street. STAFF/FILE

patrons will see a high quality of art on the street."

Artisphere gets under way Thursday night with an elegant Opening Night Gala, from 6 to 10 p.m. at the

Courtyard by Marriott's Nantucket Grill.

The outdoor festival begins 4 p.m.

YOU CAN GO

What: Artisphere, Greenville's Arts Weekend

When: 4-8 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m.-6 p.m. May 13

Where: Downtown Greenville

Admission: Free

Information:
www.artisphere.us or
864-271-9398

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Friday.

Musicians and other performers on three stages will provide almost continuous entertainment throughout the weekend.

Lots of activities will be available at Kidsphere, the children's section, including Jelly Bean Mosaics and a mural that will be placed the Ronald McDonald House after the festival.

The featured visual artists work in a variety of styles, including ceramics, drawings, glass, jewelry, oils, acrylic, watercolors, photography, print-making, sculpture and woodwork — among other media.

Twelve of the artists are from the Greenville area. The others come from around the nation.

Among new additions to the festival this year will be a wine-tasting event under four tents on the newly renovated Peace Center plaza. For \$10, patrons will be able to sample eight wines, although dozens of wines will be available.

"The festival is Mother's Day weekend, so we were trying to think of

things moms might like to do," Murphy says.

Artisphere also will create its own private label wine, featuring artwork by Daryl Thetford, based in Chattanooga.

"We've really implemented some great new things this year," Murphy says.

Another new feature this year will be an online art auction. Through the Artisphere Web site (www.artisphere.us), art patrons will be able to bid on works on display at a gallery to be located at the intersection of Camp-erdown and Main.

"If you can't be here, you can still order a piece of art from Artisphere," Murphy says. "I think people will see some fantastic pieces of work for a great value."

There'll also be new art demonstrations throughout the festival featuring glassblowing, print-making, ceramics and metal works.

In addition to the outdoor art displays, two indoor exhibitions will be featured for those wanting to escape the heat.

The Chairman's Exhibit will take place in the Founder's room above Larkin's on the River and will feature works from three of the Carolinas'

finest galleries: Helena Fox Fine Art (Charleston), Blue Spiral 1 (Asheville) and Hampton III (Greenville). Hours for the Chairman's Exhibit will be 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday.

A "Coffee & Conversation With the Artist" will feature renowned artists such as Carl Blair and John Acorn from 1 to 3 p.m. May 13 at the Chairman's Exhibit.

In addition, the Artists of the Upstate, a juried exhibition, will showcase 43 local artists at Centre Stage throughout the festival.

Some familiar faces will be present at the festival as well. Brian Olsen, a fixture of the festival since its founding, returns this year to paint his huge canvases of pop icons to the delight of onlookers.

One of the most popular attractions at the festival, Olsen works furiously with his fingertips, palms, elbows and up to three brushes at a time, producing large-scale works in only a matter of minutes. Olsen will present his "Art in Action" program throughout the festival.

People are invited to suggest subjects for Olsen on his Facebook page,

Murphy says.

In another new feature, all beverage and merchandise locations at the festival will accept credit cards.

Musical headliners for the weekend include the Ryan Bonner Band at 7 p.m. Friday, Jill Andrews at 7 p.m. Saturday and Matrimony at 4 p.m. Sunday.

Local performers are featured throughout the festival as well, including the Greenville Symphony, Greenville Light Opera Works and the S.C. Children's Theatre.

Artisphere also will dedicate a new sculpture to the city of Greenville during Opening Ceremonies at 4 p.m. Friday.

By every measure, Artisphere continue to grow in nationwide prestige, Murphy says.

About 900 artists applied to participate in the festival this year, up 100 from last year.

Average sales for artists grew from \$4,215 in 2010 to \$5,005 in 2011.

"The artists are doing very well with their average sales," Murphy says.

Follow Paul Hyde's live reviews via Twitter: @PaulHyde7. Read Paul's arts blog under "Entertainment" at greenvilleonline.com.