

Family fun in Greenville



OWEN RILEY JR. / Staff

Artisphere brings artists, entertainment food and crowds of people to downtown Greenville this weekend.

GETTING FESTIVE

Photographer Marie Gruber talks about being part of Artisphere in a video with this story at GreenvilleOnline.com

FESTIVAL HOURS

- Friday: 4 to 8 p.m.
- Saturday: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Sunday: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.



PATRICK COLLARD / Staff

Photographer Marie Gruber, at her Art Crossing studio in Greenville, will participate in this year's Artisphere.

Artisphere returns to downtown

Show this weekend to bring art, music, food fun to Main Street

By Paul Hyde

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Artisphere is a win-win for both artists and patrons, says Marie Gruber, a photographer who has participated in the festival since it began in 2005.

Greenville's big outdoor celebration of the visual arts this weekend gives artists and patrons an opportunity to connect.

"I think Artisphere is a great chance for the community to see a lot more art than they could normally see over the weekend," said Gruber, a Greenville resident.

"Artisphere brings artists from all over the country to supplement our fantastic local scene," she said.

The artists tend to sell far more art at festivals than they do in their private studios.

"Most of the artists make their living doing art shows across the country," Gruber said.

Tens of thousands of art-lovers and fun-seekers are expected to descend on downtown Greenville this weekend for Artisphere.

The seventh annual festival opens Friday at 4 p.m. and runs through Sunday.

As always, the family-friendly event features food from local restaurants, continuous entertainment and plenty of activities for children.

But the centerpiece of the festival remains the 120

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artists, local and national, who will be displaying and selling their works.

The featured artists work in a variety of media, including ceramics, glass, oils, acrylic, watercolors, photography, prints and wood — among others.

Those artists are chosen from almost 800 applicants. Gruber, who specializes in black-and-white landscape photography, said Artisphere guarantees high artistic standards by limiting participation.

"Artisphere is a very high-quality, well-juried show," said Gruber, who has a studio at Art Crossing on the Reedy River downtown. "I was very impressed with the quality of the applications."

Gruber participates in about 15 festivals across the country every year to sell her work and said that the artists she meets often have high compliments for Artisphere.

"Artisphere has gained a good reputation over the last several years," Gruber said. "Artists love the city, and Artisphere does a great job of gathering volunteers to support the artists during the show. They do a great job with artist

hospitality."

Artisphere executive director Kerry Murphy said it's impossible to determine the exact economic impact of the annual festival, although artists last year reported an average of \$4,800 in sales over the weekend.

Gala tonight

Artisphere officially gets underway tonight with a gala at the Courtyard by Marriott's Nantucket Grill, from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m.

During the outdoor festival, activities for children will be available at Kidsphere, including painting, drawing and crafting.

Sixty of the 120 artists are visiting Greenville for the first time.

"We really try to find a good mix of local, regional and national artists," Murphy said.

Ten of the artists are from the Greenville area, while works of 41 other local artists will be showcased in the Artists of the Upstate juried exhibition at Centre Stage. The galleries of several local artists also will be open over the weekend.

Murphy is particularly proud that Artisphere garnered the interest of so many new artists.

"We like to expose people to some things that they don't see here normally,"



HEIDI HEILBRUNN / Staff

Artisphere, with 120 artists from across the nation, draws crowds to downtown Greenville all weekend.

Murphy said.

Some familiar faces will be present at the festival as well. Brian Olsen, who has been 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.

"Brian Olsen packs the house all weekend long,"

Murphy said.

All of the vendors at the festival this year will accept cash instead of the usual food and beverage tickets, which often left patrons with unused tickets, Murphy said.

"We've heard some complaints over the year — the tickets are a nuisance or I've left with tickets I couldn't use," Murphy said. "So we do listen to the patrons."

Musical headliners include Sonia Leigh on Friday night at 8 p.m., and Cory Chisel and the Wandering Sons on Saturday at 8 p.m.

The indoor Chairman's

Exhibit will be featured at the Loft at Falls Park on Saturday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. The sponsoring galleries are Greenville's Hampton III Gallery and Asheville's Blue Spiral 1.

Over the weekend, Main Street will be closed from Broad to Augusta to accommodate festival activities.

Some of the new features for Artisphere 2011 include:

■ Performing artists: Nineteen new musicians, dancers and actors from New York, Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston and

Greenville will perform.

■ Visual arts demonstrations: "We've used the stages mostly for performing arts in the past but this year we have a ceramics demonstration, a traditional broom-tying demonstration and an encaustic painting demonstration," Murphy said. A glass-blower also will be on hand.

Many of the demonstrations will take place at the Culinary Arts Café Stage, at Camperdown and Main, although others will be held throughout the festival.

■ Arts Writer Paul Hyde can be reached at 864-298-4004.