Artists drawn here by art-loving crowd



OWEN RILEY JR. / Staff

From left, Janine Frenke, her mother Jane Frenke and Ann Beattie enjoy the Artisphere atmosphere Friday.

Festival kicks off for weekend downtown

YOU CAN GO

What: Artisphere
When: 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. today and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday
Where: Downtown Greenville
How much: Most events are free
For more info: Call 271-9398 or go to www.artisphere.us

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For Greenville artist Judy Verhoeven, Artisphere is a big weekend.

Even though she lives and works in Greenville, Verhoeven doesn't participate in many local art festivals. There's Open Studios in the fall and Artisphere in the spring, which makes this weekend significant for mixed-media artist Verhoeven.

"This is it," said Verhoeven, as she stood next to her booth on the opening afternoon of Artisphere. "This is my biggest sales opportunity."

As the sixth annual visual arts extravaganza got going Friday afternoon under a brilliant sun, other artists

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ARTISPHERE
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ARTS

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A living statue comes alive as Artisphere kicked off Friday on Main Street in downtown Greenville.

echoed Verhoeven's sentiments.

Watercolor painter Lynn Greer, also from Greenville, said it was a great mix of subject and venue.

"This is my hometown, so it's perfect for me," Greer said. "I can walk down the street (to get here). And my paintings were inspired by downtown."

A total of 120 visual artists are in attendance this weekend, winnowed down from an application pool of more than 680 candidates, from as far away as Israel and China, according to Kerry Murphy, the festival's executive director.

That juried application process, along with an enthusiastic audience of art lovers, appealed to Thomas Clarkson, a ceramic artist from Charlottesville, Va., at the show for the second consecutive year.

"It has a reputation as a good quality show, and it has a good customer base," Clarkson said.

After 30 years as an artist, "You look for people who appreciate what you do," Clarkson said. Artisphere officials and festival-goers alike have shown much appreciation for his work.

People looking to brighten up their lives or homes will have plenty to choose from all along Main Street. More than 17 types of visual media are represented, including jewelry, photography, fiber art and furniture.

And while visual arts are a big part of the festival, the other senses aren't neglected.

Musical performances go on throughout today and Sunday on the Culinary Arts Café and Stage on Camperdown Way, with sets by such musicians as Danielle Howle of Columbia and Brian Ashley Jones of Nashville.

The Peace Center Amphitheatre Stage will feature a variety of performers, beginning at 9 a.m. today with a demonstration by Family Yoga. The South Carolina Governor's School, Children's Theatre, Greenville Symphony Orchestra and Chicora Voices also are set to perform.

Art in Action, the popular performances by Brian Olsen, who creates large paintings in a matter of minutes, will go on throughout the day today and Sunday in Falls Park.

And an event Murphy describes as one of Artisphere's "hidden gems" is Kidsphere, an area where children can exercise their own creativity. They will have the chance to make jewelry, hats, mosaic bowls and paper collages.

Kidsphere is open from 10 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. today and from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. Sunday in the Wyche Pavilion behind the Peace Center.

Festival events are concentrated in the South Main Street area, and Main Street is closed from Broad to Augusta, and a portion of Camperdown is also closed.

In addition to the scheduled events, there will be street performers and sidewalk artists, who create works of art out of chalk. Food with an international flair can be found in the Culinary Arts Café, which will serve pizza, sushi, Mexican cuisine and other offerings from local restaurants.

And for folks who want to get out of the sun and enjoy art in air-conditioned surroundings, a couple of exhibits will be open.

Chairman's Exhibit: A Gallery Showcase will be open inside *The Greenville News* building, 305 S. Main St. It will showcase works from Hampton III Gallery of Greenville, Blue Spiral I of Asheville, and the Elder Gallery of Charlotte.

And at Centre Stage, 501 River St., the Artists of the Upstate Juried Exhibition will highlight the work of local artists who live or work within a 35-mile radius of Greenville.