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"Birmingham, Alabama", painting by Springfield's Anthony Matteis



In the festival dining tent: curries, pad thai, clam chowder, dim sum, pakoras, burgers, mango lassi, apple crisp, homemade ice cream and more. The soundstage hosts jazz by local and national musicians.



"Group of Mobul Bowls", handblown glass by Peter Muller of Guilford, Vt.

OUT AND ABOUT IN
'Paradise'

Tips for navigating annual city arts festival
 by Ashley Barry, Gazette Contributing Writer

Rob Greene of Marshfield, Vt. has participated in 26 Paradise City Arts Festivals, including the inaugural show. Shown here: "Opal Brooch" - a hand-cut boulder opal in 18 and 22k gold.



The Paradise City Arts Festival will celebrate its 15th anniversary with its traditional Columbus Day weekend visit to the Three County Fairgrounds in Northampton.

Inside and under tents, rain or shine, 260 artists from 30 states and Canada will showcase original artwork that ranges from ceramics, painting, decorative fiber, art glass and fine furniture to jewelry, leather, metal, mixed media, photography, large-scale sculpture, wearable art and wood.

"So many people who come to Paradise City are simply blown away by the work on display. It's not just the fact that everything is high quality; there are so many different kinds of art," said the festival's founding director, Linda H. Post, in a phone interview last week. "They'll see things for the home that they'll never see anywhere else; they won't be able to imagine it in their wildest dreams."

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

The festival is located at the Three County Fairgrounds in Northampton, and is within walking distance of downtown. The exhibit area consists of an arena building, the Morgan buildings (a red barn duo marked "Morgan One" and "Morgan Two"), a dining tent and an exhibition tent. There's an information booth inside the exhibition tent.



Northfield artist Linda Jacque calls her hand painted furniture "fun, funky bursts of color".

WHO'S GOT THE GOLDEN TICKETS?

"A lot of people come back multiple days, it's easy to do," Post said. If a visitor has only a couple of hours to spare, reentry passes for the price of \$3 may be purchased. "Sometimes you can get visual overload, there's so much to look at."

A HELPFUL GUIDE

Once you've purchased a ticket, you'll get a Paradise City Guide, a 40 page magazine containing a map of the festival and a listing of the artists. "If you're interested in looking at jewelry or furniture, you can find the exhibitors by media category," Post said. "You can make yourself your own personal guide depending on your interest."

SO WHAT'S THE PLAN, STAN?

"You can plan before you come to the show; the Paradise City Guide is on our online home page (www.paradisecityarts.com)," Post said.



Wendy Costa of Berne, NY, fills her display with whimsical and colorful drawings on ceramic tiles, handbags and "shoe sculptures" fit for an oversize Cinderella.

Ananda Khalsa's pieces contain an original painting on paper. Shown here: "Lotus Necklace" - 22k gold, sterling silver, glass, bezel-set hand-painted acrylic painting on watercolor paper.



DON'T BREAK THE BANK

Prices vary as much as the types of art for sale, Post says, ranging from \$20 to \$20,000, so look for things you can afford. "If you don't have a lot of money to spend, you still don't have to go home empty-handed. You come home with a coffee mug that makes you feel great when you pour your coffee into it, knowing you only spent \$15 or \$20 on your coffee mug," Post said.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Over the years, Paradise City has raised more than \$200,000 to benefit Hospice and other community non-profit organizations. This year, a silent auction will benefit the Fisher Home of Amherst, the region's Hospice residence for terminally-ill people in the last stage of life. Over the course of the three-day festival, some 250 pieces of artwork that have been donated by this year's exhibitors will be auctioned, including architectural sculpture, jewelry, drawings, paintings, glass, ceramic and hand-woven clothing. All the proceeds from the winning bids go to Hospice.

DON'T SHOP ON AN EMPTY STOMACH

Located inside the dining tent will be food for sale from restaurants, including the East Side Grill, India House, Mama Iguana, The Great Wall, and more. "There will be gourmet burgers, spicy curries, blackened scallops, and hot apple crisp. It's a place where "everybody meets and talks about what they've seen," Post said. The festival has received kudos for its food from the National Association for Independent Artists that recognized both the food and the quality of the show.

TAKE A MUSIC BREAK

On a sound stage located inside the dining tent, audiences will be treated to live jazz. "We've decided to raise the music up a little notch," Post said. On Saturday, Grammy Award-winning saxophonist Charles Neville will perform; on Sunday, Jose Gonzalez plays his original compositions that feature the cuatro, Puerto Rico's national instrument; and on Monday, The Chet Pasek Quartet rocks the vibraphone in the tradition of Milt Jackson and Gary Burton.

LEARN SOMETHING NEW

Several artists will offer demonstrations throughout the weekend. For example, there will be a pot-throwing demonstration by potter Tim Scull of Canton Clayworks in Connecticut. "He gets a big crowd, throws big pots. He's really entertaining," Post said. Glassblowers from Snow Farm, an arts education and craft program in Williamsburg, will demonstrate lampworking glass - shaping pieces of colored glass into objects using a blazing torch. There's also a weaving and spinning demonstration by Webs® America's Yarn Store. "It has a world-wide reputation and it started out in Northampton," Post said.

BRING THE KIDS, KEEP 'EM HAPPY

"Paradise City is a great place to introduce kids to the arts, it's an open-minded place. Artists are there and can explain how they created a piece of work. Kids are in awe of what's being made," Post said. A children's activity in which kids can try out weaving and yarn dyeing will be held at Webs® America's Yarn Store. "When kids do get tired, ice cream is always available," Post said.

LOOK FOR THE TRIED-AND-TRUE...

The "Then and Now" exhibit, a show within a show in the Gazebo area in the Arena building, includes the artwork of 26 artists who were involved in the very first festival - the ones who "took a leap of faith," Post said. "They're bringing pieces from the past from somewhere around 1995 and a piece from the present, and those are going to be displayed together along with other memorabilia - this is a chance for art appreciators to see the artistic journey of these artists over time."



Artists will offer demonstrations in ceramics, weaving, spinning, yarn-dyeing and jewelry-making.

...AND SOMETHING NEW

Featured works will also include works by artists from across the country who are new to the festival. "People who come to the show regularly look for the new artists, I think having a lot of new work in the show will keep people excited and coming back," Post said.

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Photos courtesy Paradise City Arts Festival