

Buy Local

Art in the Park offers opportunity to support local artists

By Michael Porter

Lexington artist Harriet Giles can distill the importance of the Woodland Arts Fair to one concept and that's sustainability: "I know that buying locally, including the arts, is going to become much more important as the cost of fuel continues to increase and our mentality starts to adjust. I think the country (at least I hope) is going to lose the current fascination/obsession with inexpensive imported goods that leave a large carbon footprint to transport and are based on a wage scale that is putting a lot of American artisans out of business. I think if we continue to bring creatively inspired and well-made art and craft to the public, they will continue to recognize not only the beauty, but the intrinsic value and reflection of its geographic place of origin."

As for what art lovers can expect from her at this year's Fair, she says, "I design and hand-weave upscale rugs in contemporary and traditional designs. Room-size rugs are a specialty, most of them commissioned on a custom basis and woven on my twelve-foot wide wooden floor loom. I will be showing a number of new designs in room and area sizes at the WAF."

Artist Philip Jones (on this week's cover) says, "For this year's Woodland Art Fair I am doing an installation of a work entitled 31 Brains for 31 Days which is comprised of 31 individual paintings that are each 9" x 12". Each painting is the visual manifestation of a daily 'mind mapping' exercise that I have adhered to for the past few months. On display will be 'brain paintings' from July 9 - August 9, 2008. All of the paintings are abstracted brains rendered in ink, watercolor, gouache, colored pencil, etc... I will be doing a show of similar work in Paris, France this winter..."

John Zeigler says, "I make traditional stained and leaded glass. The bulk of my work is custom made and Woodland gives me a chance to show people different kinds of art glass. My favorite piece this year is called 'Mona Lisa's Left Eye.' I took a photo of her face and enlarged it to the point that it pixelated. Then in pinks and purples and caramel-colors I've rendered her left eye in glass."

This year's Woodland Art Fair, the 33rd annual art smorgasbord in Woodland Park, has lofty ambitions. "Call it preparation for the World Equestrian Games, organizational transition or even natural evolution, but several of the arts organizations, including Lexington Art League, are taking an inward look themselves to analyze what each of us do and how each of us are contributing to the fabric of Lexington's cultural landscape," says Lexington Art League's Joe Artz.

The Woodland Arts Fair has just received a 'top 15' ranking from Sunshine Artist Magazine, who rates about 900 such festivals each year and is considered "the bible of the art fair circuit." Local metalsmith and Woodland Art Fair participant Lloyd Hughes sees why: "opportunities for artists are pretty



Art by Rod Lindauer

good" here in the Bluegrass.

Giles says, "I think the LAL has made significant progress. The decision to jury the WAF nationally and upgrade the quality, the programs and exhibits produced by the LAL, and the experience and creativity of the LAL staff and its artists has continually increased to make it one of the leading art organizations in the country."

Artz adds, "there is a renewed interest in the arts and not just from its producers. Audiences are whole-heartedly embracing arts events, new corporate interest can be identified as you look at various sponsor lists and even hopeful politicians are championing the arts as part of their platforms."

He adds, "I do see an opportunity for the city to market our summer entertainment in its entirety. From UK Opera Theatre's Grand Night for Singing, to SummerFest, to Ballet Under the Stars and right up until the American Founders Bank Woodland Art Fair (and everything in between), Lexington offers an exciting array of entertainment and each of us, in our own way, champion local talent while working very hard to contribute something meaningful to the community," he says.

That "something meaningful" from the 51 Kentucky artists (out of 200 total) that have been juried in for this year's event can range from artistic rugs to pottery to metalwork to watercolor paintings.

Artist John Snell says "I think the Bluegrass is a wonderful place to be an artist, as there seem to be good outlets for our work...galleries, art fairs, exhibits, etc. The Gallery Hops and Lexington Art League's Fourth Friday events, as well as the WAF give the arts lots of exposure. "

Giles adds "Kentucky got a great head start nationally in the crafts with KCM and KMAC. The Kentucky Guild had already laid a wonderful foundation as well, banking to

some extent on our state's heritage of crafts. By the time a lot of other states and guilds were enhancing their marketing techniques and profiles, Kentucky was already a leader. Since Lexington is the second largest city in the state, we have a larger proportion of artists as well as a very successful Art League. The arts are widely appreciated here completing a necessary circle of producers and customers."

However, long-time Woodland Art Fair vet Marianna McDonald, who left a management job at the Herald-Leader in 2001 to follow her dream of being a full-time artist, characterizes the state of the arts here as "average" and she doesn't see much progress "except for a few hospitals stepping forward and buying original art," adding "The galleries have not seen enough business generated from Gallery Hop to buy wine."

She does say, "the patrons at LAL WAF are very knowledgeable and interested in the art process. I love showing here, but I may be a bit prejudiced since it's my hometown too."

And for an average arts scene, she has a busy schedule, "I'll participate in 13 art fairs, have six galleries that carry my work and I teach pastels to adults in the winter — art fairs off-season. I'm a participating artist in the 'Mark of Great Art' contest sponsored by Maker's Mark which is featuring 54 Kentucky artists and will be showing the work in four American cities and two overseas sites. I received a Lincoln Bicentennial Product Development grant from Kentucky Arts Council and will have five images available in giclee reproductions of Kentucky Lincoln sites."

Snell loves the fair, saying, "the crowds are typically large, enthusiastic and respond very positively to my work. It's not unusual for me to have no time to sit and rest at any time during the busy-ness of the event."

Now.

If only the rain will hold off. ■

American Founders Bank Woodland Art Fair Saturday, August 16, 10am - 6pm Sunday, August 17, 11am - 5pm Woodland Park, Lexington, KY Free.

Someone Left the (funnel) cakes out in the Rain

The one thing every year every artist talks about is the weather at the Woodland Arts Fair. "We just keep our fingers crossed for temps in the mid-70's, no rain and a nice breeze," local artist and perennial Woodland Art Fair participant John Snell says.

Vet Marianna McDonald just feels lucky to be under cover. She says, "I've been involved since the 1980s — before it was a juried show. We didn't even have tents—just displays that we covered with plastic when it rained."

Bad weather isn't always bad for business though. Snell adds, "Two years ago, sales were really booming during the first couple of hours of business at the fair on Saturday morning. Around 12:30, a rainstorm moved in, forcing people to seek shelter in the nearest artist's tent. Since a couple of my racks of prints were under narrow awnings, I moved them to the entranceways of my tent, somewhat blocking the ingress and egress. 'You all are welcome to stay here while it's raining,' I told the 8 or 10 folks in my booth. 'But you have to buy something!' We all had a good laugh over that. I'll never know if my comment was taken seriously or not, but in the next 45 minutes, my 'captive' customers made nearly \$500 worth of purchases! Sounds like a good marketing plan to me!" ■

GreenGrief

Applicants selected to Mourn for Dame Block

In April 2005, the *Courier-Journal* (that would be the daily newspaper in *Louisville*) published a story, "Mourning walk—Lexington artist hires an apologist for urban sprawl." In the article, Katya Cengel wrote, "How do you go about hiring a mourner? Do you ask friends for references, wait for a sign from above, or place a classified advertisement in Lexington-area newspaper *Ace Weekly*? If you are Bruce Burris, you do the latter. For several weeks this year, the artist from Lexington ran a classified that offered applicants \$100 to 'mourn for loss of natural habitat, meditate on the reasons for its destruction, apologize for our culture's behavior and offer prayers of healing.' More than 30 people, mostly women, applied. Some sent poems, some sent manifestos—way over the 100 words Burris requested—and some asked paranoid questions, like 'Who are you working for?'" The article went on to detail the designated mourner's walk out at Beaumont Circle.

Earlier this summer, Burris took out a similar classified in *Ace*, reading, "Help Wanted: Mourner. GREENGRIEF The Kentucky Mourning Project provides compensation to mourners for grieving, praying, singing, and for giving thoughtful

"GROUND ZERO" photo by Trevor Booker

consideration and sincere apologies to our earth for the environmental and cultural devastation wrought by us humans to it in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Mourner wanted to grieve for loss by demolition of irreplaceable historical/cultural and architecturally unique block in downtown Lexington Kentucky (the Dame block), to apologize for our culture's sad lust for profit and to offer prayers of healing and hope. Mourner is asked to articulate these expectations while walking around the block for a period of one hour (noon to 1pm) during a weekdate yet to be decided in September 2008."

In August, three mourners were selected. **Lyndsey Fryman, Brittany Clark** and **Jenny O'Neill's** mourning proposals were selected from the eighteen submitted.

(And once again, Louisville's *Courier-Journal* covered it. Diane Heilenman's story was published August 1, "Mourners wanted: Whole historical block to die soon." It's in their online archives.)

The designated mourners' proposals are re-printed below.

Brittany Clark wrote, "Mourning has taken on an entire-

ly new meaning for me following the announcement of the loss of the Dame block. It engulfs utter despair and sorrow for the city—for my friends—for myself—for generations to come. Not only was this block historic and beautiful; it was also the heartbeat of the city. It was a common union among the masses of individuality. It united even the oddest of pairs. When your hearts beat the same pulse, no other differences matter. I will forever long for that connection, like a soul searching for my matching pulse." Clark has included plans for her mourning project on her facebook page.

Jenny O'Neill wrote, "I am truly aggrieved by the callousness of the Webb brothers and the cupidity/stupidity of our civic leaders who have—with the exception of Jim Gray—just gone along. I *am* mourning—for the loss of our past, for the greed that drives so much of our decision making, and for the lack of vision and concern for the generations to come that CentrePointe reflects. I too am fascinated by the process of mourning—both the individual and the societal. CentrePointe is urban mountain top removal."

Lyndsey Fryman wrote, "Everything has a history, traditions, cultures people and even places. For this reason I have a great interest in this project. To mourn something that has been lost traditionally has been our societies way to cope with death, and give memory to the deceased. These mourning rites embedded in our culture would allow one to ceremonially satisfy the concept of separation and bring together the community for the support of the griever. As an artist I have a great respect for these historic practices; particularly for the Victorian era which incorporated an element of creation in mourning art. I find it interesting the downtown Lexington block which was demolished, lived through such an era and beyond. And through its time experienced traditions come and go, wars in and outside our country, the beginnings and endings of lives and finally its own. Some would say is strange to grieve something opposed to someone, it is unheard of, why do it? For me, it is a loss of life, or loss of a chapter of history in Lexington, or even a loss of a block that represents the down town Lexington commercial and entertainment community at its beginnings. Now that it is gone, this history has no rent, it is irreplaceable and the future of it is dead. The rubble which remains, lies as a body of the deceased, no longer holding its eternal spirit only at this funeral, it is the enjoyment and profit of the people in the community. By 2010 that history will not be known by those who visit the CentrePointe Hotel, and the cultural scene that was once indigenous to the people of Lexington will no longer be as it was. My intentions would be to give memory to the block by paying tribute through mourning in the Victorian manner. It seems fitting being the block was a witness to the era. And during my performance I will grieve the loss of history, but cope though constructing a memorial from what is left of the once living block. Although my performance would be temporal, my hope is the memory of the remains will keep the spirit alive." ■

The Kentucky Mourning Project events will occur on Friday and Saturday, September 12th and 13th at the CentrePointe site. For more information and to contact mourners: Bruce Burris ELandFgallery@yahoo.com

