

Paradise City Arts Festivals Celebrate



Over the past 20 years, Paradise City has cultivated a loyal customer base of nearly a quarter of a million people. The company reaches them across many platforms, including through a biannual magazine, the *Paradise City Guide*, with a subscription base of over 70,000 avid art lovers. It also created *Art Buzz*, a monthly e-newsletter that shares behind-the-scenes stories of many Paradise City artists, giving fascinating insights into their lives, work habits, creative challenges, and accomplishments. The company's website, paradisecityarts.com, is a living resource for comprehensive information about its shows and individual artists and has become the go-to place for tens of thousands of shoppers looking for great ideas to fill their homes or wardrobes.

Paradise City currently produces four gated indoor shows each year. Visitors arrive from across the region and the country to enjoy an unparalleled collection of the nation's most original craft makers and independent artists.

Upon awarding their events the #1 spot in 2008 in the annual "Top Ten Art Fairs and Festivals in America," *AmericanStyle Magazine* declared Paradise City Arts Festivals "truly innovative ... fresh and vibrant, with extraordinary quality."

The original Paradise City Arts Festival in Northampton, Mass., was founded in 1995 by Geoffrey

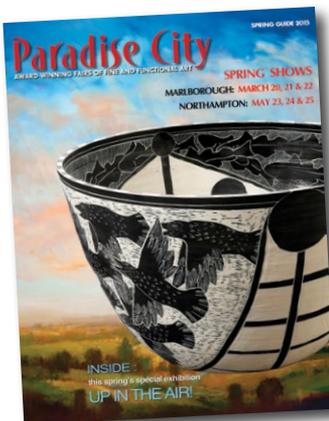
Left: The *Paradise City Guide*, a biannual magazine, boasts over 70,000 art-loving subscribers.

and Linda Post, both practicing artists who spent 20 years on the show circuit themselves. "Making a living as a practicing artist is no easy thing," Geoff explains, "Being creative in your studio, coming up with a body of work that excites you, hoping customers will respond, packing it all up, and bringing it to a show. But you're still not done. You need to put on your marketing hat and connect with your customers and display your work in a way that people will respond to." Their lives as artists laid the foundation for the guiding principles of Paradise City: respect artists in all ways possible, make shows easy, fun, and profitable, and help artists reach an ever-growing audience both at shows and beyond.

That philosophy is the cornerstone of Paradise City Membership, an innovative program that makes it easy for artists to tap into key marketing and business services. It reduces costs and paperwork and keeps them in front of a broader base of qualified collectors year-round. It allows artists to focus on the work in their studios, knowing Paradise City is shouldering some of the burden of promoting them and their work on a year-round basis.

On the administrative side, membership benefits include free, automatically submitted applications to all Paradise City shows, free show postcard mailings to the artist's customers with a personalized message and a discount admission coupon courtesy of the artist, flexible booth fee payment plans, and VIP passes to give to preferred customers at the shows.

On the marketing side, members also have the opportunity to be featured in the monthly *Art Buzz* e-newsletter. This is a new marketing initiative launched in the



20 Years of Success



Above from left: Jewelry maker Ananda Khalsa's work is inspired by Asian art and natural forms. • Artist Bayley Wharton crafts handmade furniture out of hardwood. • Ken Salem's unique offerings are primarily made from reclaimed lumber.

last year, and it has been enormously successful. In its first year, subscriptions are approaching 40,000 with an impressive open rate and multiple click-throughs to the artists' websites. *Art Buzz*, with its emphasis on artists' work and perceptive insights into their lives and studios, has become an additional link in the connection between Paradise City's customers and its artists. Members also receive a free sales Web page in the Artist Showcase on paradisecityarts.com. Patrons use these pages as a year-round shopping resource before, during, and after shows.

Paradise City places great importance on publicity for its shows, using highly effective and innovative visuals, press kits, and promotional materials. That publicity is focused on the artists and their work—a show's greatest asset. The "Show Stoppers" section in the *Paradise City Guide* showcases in-depth profiles of a selection of that season's exhibitors in Fashion and Jewelry, Furniture and Home Furnishings, and Fine Art and Sculpture. How do artists get featured? "We get that question all the time," says Linda Post. "The most effective way to be featured in our publicity efforts is to send us great new images as soon as you have them, news about your achievements and commissions, and stories about innovative techniques you've developed or big projects."

The directors also mount themed exhibitions at each event, with titles like "Wild Things," "Face to Face," "The Nature of Beauty," and this fall's exhibit,



Above: Paradise City sends out free postcard mailings to artists' customers prior to their shows.



Above: Each *Paradise City Guide* showcases a selection of that season's exhibitors.

Right: The monthly *Art Buzz* e-newsletter has nearly 40,000 subscribers and is still growing.



"Eat, Drink, and Be Merry!" These special shows are open to all exhibitors and provide added visibility and publicity to participating artists. In addition, they encourage the artists to think outside the box and try showing work created in a different media, aesthetic, or concept. In a similar vein, there is a "People's Choice Award for Outstanding Outdoor Art" in the Northampton event's permanently landscaped outdoor Sculpture Garden and Courtyard. In this case, scale is often the inspiration. Many exhibitors build pieces to place in the very popular Sculpture Garden that would never fit in a standard indoor booth. Large-scale outdoor sculpture has become one of the best-selling media categories at Paradise City's shows.

In 20 years the marketplace has changed significantly. More and more, shows are just one point of contact—albeit a very important financial one! Technology has opened up brand-new avenues of communication and engagement. Websites, email, and social media have all become important tools to encourage customers to see your work at shows and to stay connected all year long.^{HB}