

Welcome to *paradise*

Arts festival returns to Three County Fairgrounds for annual Memorial Day weekend event

By **AUDREY DONOHUE**
For the Gazette

At the peak of spring, among the flowers, trees and the gardens, art will also flourish this weekend, at the Paradise City Arts Festival.

This year's festival, "Springtime in Paradise," will take place Saturday, Sunday and Monday, at the Three County Fairgrounds in Northampton.

The fair will exhibit original works by some 250 artists and craftspeople, from 21 states, who work in ceramics, painting, decorative fiber, art glass, furniture, jewelry, metal, mixed media, photography, large-scale sculpture, wearable art and woodworking.

The exhibits will be held in three buildings at the fairgrounds.

"The festival is a big show, it's a giant show," said Linda Post, the festival's founding director. The artists set up individual boutiques, she says, some of them quite elaborate

she adds, "for something only there for three days, and Poof! It's gone."

Post says between 12,000 and 14,000 people typically visit the three-day festival, which was founded in 1995.

Made locally

Thirty-seven of this year's artists work and live in Hampshire County, and many are making a return visit to the festival. Among them will be Theresa Crowninshield of Easthampton.

"Theresa Crowninshield does beautiful, very intricately tailored fashion, suits and jackets and all sorts of beautifully tailored clothing," Post said.

Another returning local artist is Valerie Bunnell of Florence.

"Valerie Bunnell does ... fantasy sculpture," Post said. "They are figures that have a mixture of clay and mixed media."

SEE PARADISE CITY C2



PHOTO COURTESY OF PATRICIA BELANGER

Above, "Zebra" by Patricia Belanger

At right, "Blueberry Rose Moon", a quilted, pieced and appliqued fiber hanging by Elizabeth Sylvan.

At right center, a constant source and inspiration for Northampton artist Jane Herzenberg is the Japanese tradition of simplicity in design.



The outdoor Sculpture Garden is permanently landscaped at the Three County Fairgrounds. Each season brings a new set of artist installations, including sculpture, fountains, birdbaths and furniture.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PARADISE CITY ARTS FESTIVAL

Paradise City Arts Festival



PHOTO COURTESY OF PARADISE CITY ARTS FESTIVAL

James Kitchen, whose sculpture "Walking Man" is seen here, has been welding scrap metal into sculpture for 10 years. He'll present a SMARTtalk Monday at 12:30 p.m.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PARADISE CITY ARTS FESTIVAL

From across the room, Christina Meyers' landscape collages look like watercolor paintings. Upon looking closer, viewers discover her "paintings" are made up of tiny pieces of fabric. This one, a detail of which is shown here, is part of "American Beauty" at the arts festival.

FROM C1

Other local participating artists who have exhibited in the past are Eva Camacho-Sanchez, Ananda Khalsa, James Guggina, Elizabeth Sylvan and Emily Rosenfeld, all of Florence; Jane Herzenberg, Piper Foresco and Ken Salem; Matthew Evald Johnson, all of Northampton; Bonnie Johnson of Easthampton; and David Poppie of Westhampton.

'American Beauty'

Among the multiple facets of the fair is what Post calls a "show-within-a-show" — a smaller, themed exhibit that showcases from 40 to 50 pieces. It's a concept Post has included since 2008.

This year's highlighted exhibit is "American Beauty: From Landscape to Dreamscape."

A dreamscape, Post explained, "is something that seems improbable. ... More than something you can actually see, it's something that is creating an impression of a dream or an emotion."

The dreamscape concept has inspired all the artists, Post says, whether or not they have a piece in the special exhibit.

"The theme inspires them to think outside the box and produce something along those lines," she said.

More highlights

There's also a sculpture garden at the festival, which Post says is one of her favorite parts of the fair.

"We're especially strong in sculpture this year, in both indoor and outdoor sculpture," she said. "Sculpture has been doing extraordinary well at our festivals. ... The sculpture garden gets more beautiful every year."

The fair also features a silent art auction to benefit the Kestrel Land Trust, which works to conserve and preserve public lands — the same lands, Post points out, that often serve as inspiration for landscape artists.

Get smart

"SMARTtalk," introduced at the festival last fall, provides educational presentations to accompany the art on view. It is presented either by a participating artist or an interested member of the community.

The Kestrel Land Trust will present a talk, "The Art of the Landscape, Past & Present," with Lewis Bryden and Andrea Caluori-Rivera. Bryden, a Hadley artist, has painted Pioneer Valley landscapes, from his houseboat, for years (Sunday, 3 p.m., Exhibition Building — Barn 3).

Another talk will be "Pondering Imponderables," by Chesterfield artist James Kitchen, who has won many awards at Paradise City for his large-scale, often philosophical sculptures that he welds using found-metal objects (Monday, 12:30 p.m., Booth 601 in the Arena Building).

"I think people really like to have an educational aspect," Post said. "It's a great opportunity to enrich their experience of the show."

will offer food by local chefs and live music under the 10,000-square-foot Festival Dining Tent. On the Soundstage, performances include, on Saturday, The Paradise Jazz Group; on Sunday, Sugar Ray and the Bluetones; and, on Monday, The O-Tones.

The Paradise City Arts Festival will be held Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Monday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Three County Fairgrounds, 54 Old Ferry Road, Northampton.

Admission costs \$13; \$12 for seniors 65 and over; \$8 for students; free for 12 and under. A three-day pass is available for \$16. Group discounts are available.

Parking is free and the site is handicapped accessible.

For information, including a schedule of SMARTtalks, visit www.paradisecityarts.com.



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