

OHIO

July 28&29, Akron Arts Expo, Contact: Penny Bomba (330) 375-2852 or Brittany Schmoekel (330) 375-2854. Website: www.akronartsexpo.org. E-mail: pbomba@akronohio.gov and bschmoekel@akronohio.gov. Space fee: \$200. Exhibitors: 168. Hours: 10-6 Saturday, 10-5 Sunday. Admission: free

By Kristina Malcolm

Ohio Reporter

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Medium: Silversmithing

2012 was the 33rd year for the Akron Arts Expo, held at Hardesty Park in Akron, Ohio. With over 160 artists in attendance, it is clear that this show has a good reputation. The Expo appeals to artists from all over the United States. They came in from as far as Florida, Texas, Arizona and California as well as Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

I have only exhibited here four out of the last seven years I applied due to the competitive nature my media. However, I will continue to apply to this event because sales are good. There are also great artist benefits. “Complementary breakfasts each morning, the Artist Dinner Saturday night, booth sitters and keeping the booth fee reasonable makes this show wonderful” says Penny Bomba, the Artist Coordinator of the Expo. She also goes on to say “booth size is 15’ x 15’. Since we can offer a larger space it allows artists more flexibility for display and storage such as using side panels to display their work and patrons access to them.”

When I spoke with Bomba about their application process, she explained “online applications are accepted from February 1st through March 31st each year. This was our second year of accepting online applications only. Each artist submits four images of their work and one image of their booth display. We encourage each artist to give a detailed description of each piece and their technique. A panel of five jurors is selected each year based on their overall knowledge of the categories. The jurors look at originality, design, representation of media, quality and display of each applicant. Accepted artists are chosen based on their overall score.” They offer four main categories in which to apply: 2-D (photography, painting, drawing, graphics), 3-D (metal, mixed media, sculpture and wood), Functional (ceramic, fibers & textiles, leather and wood) and Ornamental (jewelry, ceramic, fibers & textiles, leather and wood). Bomba also said, “each year we review our category selections to ensure we are encompassing the needs of the artists and how they identify themselves.”

Friday night after set up there was a downpour of rain which left about four inches of standing water in my booth. The evidence was a four-inch ring of mud around my tent sides and the totes left on the ground. I over heard many artists talking about the damage it caused Saturday morning.

Also notable is the high amount of theft. Every artist has to deal with this potential threat but it seems to be a big issue at this location. I spoke with a jeweler from Canal Fulton who learned the hard way not to put rings out where he couldn’t see them.

Most of the vendors I spoke with were content with their sales. Returning artists reported they experienced sales on par with previous years and new artists seemed pleased. Artists who were not content with the show stated people were just out to look, not to buy.

This year, through an aggressive promotional campaign, the show drew over 20,000 visitors. I also asked Bomba about their advertising efforts. She said “our media schedule includes some newspaper advertising, two local magazines, radio advertising, direct mail promotional postcards, included in direct mail event brochure to over 100,000 residents, social media promotion, and we have large signs posted around the community announcing the event.” She adds “what keeps Akron Arts Expo unique is the support of our community and the dedication of our staff,

volunteers and sponsors to make each individual artists' experience in Akron memorable.”