



Headed by Liz Gore, daughter of Rio Grande Festivals' Ruth Gore, Denver's Cheesman Park Art Fest debuted this year.

marked her third year as its owner and sole coordinator.

It's further worth noting that the show is a non-profit and awarded \$3,000 in scholarships to three Grand County students this year. Finally, be aware that each artist is required to purchase a \$60 sales tax license from the Town of Winter Park. That was the one complaint I heard from artists; however, since the booth fee is \$145, expenses were still low.

Editor's note: We received one FastAudit on this show by press time, and it was submitted by a mixed media artist who reported \$1,500 total from an average item price of \$70. He/she gave above-average marks to all categories with two exceptions: a slightly below-average grade to sales and an average score for attendance. He/she is willing to return, but noted his/her sales were less than half what they were two years earlier.

► **July 27-28, Cheesman Park Art Fest, Denver.** Contact: Liz Gore, Rio Grande Festivals/Dash Events, 200 Poplar Street, Unit E, Denver, CO 80220. Phone: 505-550-2471. Email: cheesmanparkartfest@gmail.com. Website: www.

riograndefestivals.com. Application fee: \$25. Space fee: \$350-\$700. Space size: 10x10 to 10x20. 100% outdoors. Exhibitors: 100. Hours: 10-8 Saturday, 10-5 Sunday.

By David Schneider

Arizona and New Mexico Reporter

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Medium: Photography

The first-ever Cheesman Park Art Fest in Denver is done and in the books. One never knows what to expect with a first-time show, as there are a lot of unknowns to consider. However, Cheesman wasn't your typical, run-of-the-mill, rookie outing: It was produced by Liz Gore's Dash Events, which comes

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directly from Ruth Gore's Rio Grande Festivals, so the organizers had quite a bit of experience to draw from. True to form, this show was an absolute success by any measure and considering that it marked the event's debut, I would call it outstanding.

It helped that Cheesman Park was a nice location. The park has broad expanses of grass and old, tall trees, making for a beautiful setting, and its central positioning not far from downtown Denver was ideal. The 100 artists lined one section of the street in alternating blocks, making for a good traffic flow as patrons wandered freely and, for the most part, gave each exhibitor attention.

Better still, the artist selection and quality was everything you would expect from a Rio Grande show, which is to say very good.



Crowds were reportedly strong at Denver's Cheesman Park Arts Festival.

With a broad mix of exhibitors, the event was also well-balanced, including out-of-state, out-of-town and local artists, allowing patrons to simultaneously visit favorites and discover new talents.

Speaking of which, the ultimate success of any show is if patrons attend and purchase, and that certainly happened. At the start of opening day, the streets were pretty quiet, and quite a few exhibitors were a little nervous. After all, what if no one came? However, before you realized it, the streets filled as if by magic: Patrons were stopping by booths, examining work, asking questions and, like as not, purchasing. Saturday's crowd was particularly robust, and many artists I contacted were all smiles by the end of the day. Sunday also saw a decent showing, although not quite as good as Saturday.

In fact, one exhibitor I spoke to had his/her best Saturday ever of any show, and he/she has been doing this for a bit. Another remarked that he/she had his/her best show ever by the middle of the day Sunday, and he/she continued to sell until the end of the day. Most artists with whom I talked reported good to strong sales, and many

were extremely impressed with not only the attendance, but the fact that patrons were in fact purchasing. Crucially, attendees seemed to purchase at all price points.

Cheesman Park's location in a popular, well-established area doubtlessly helped. Many patrons were able to walk to the show, and for the most part they appreciated having it in their area. Yes, it brought significant traffic to their "backyard," but overall the residents were gracious and happy for the festival.

Logistics worked out fairly well, and the load-in process was a lot smoother than I thought it might be. Since all 100 artists needed to load into a relatively small space, with highly limited entrance/exit points, I was afraid it was going to be difficult. However, it went amazingly smoothly, and artists came, unloaded and went without major problems. And while you might expect general snafus and problems at a first-time show, as well as some confusion, experience paved the way here again, and there were no major issues. Any problems that came up were handled promptly and efficiently, and it felt like setting up for a show that had been

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around a long time. Kudos to all the behind-the-scenes efforts! (Breakdown had some chaotic moments, but that is to be expected in any show.)

Additionally, security was present throughout the day and overnight, and quite a few volunteers were on hand during load-in and the main event. The latter were able to quickly handle whatever issues came up and really helped everything run smoothly.

Artist parking, on the other hand, was somewhat problematic. Because it was a street show, exhibitors had to either take a shuttle or park in the neighborhood. Neither was a great solution, but neither was very difficult, either. Large-vehicle and trailer parking was provided but again, a shuttle had to be utilized. Still, the organizers did the best they could given the constraints they faced and also made arrangements with a nearby hotel, which made life a lot easier for out-of-town artists.

The festival was also well advertised and promoted in the Denver area, as the crowds could easily attest to. It was fun to eavesdrop on the patrons, and those I overheard universally thought it was a very good event. Some of them wondered why they hadn't seen the show before, which is a pretty good compliment. It was compared very, very favorably to other local Denver festivals, and more than once I heard the comment, "I can't wait for next year's show."

In addition to the artists, the event featured live music, giving patrons a chance to relax for a few moments and enjoy. Food trucks, which were an ingenious touch, were also present. (At least one food truck actually ran out of food

toward the end of the day, which is another testament to the attendance.)

Of course, this being an outdoor show means that you have to be prepared for anything. Plus, this is Colorado right in the middle of monsoon season, so rain can potentially be an issue. Luckily, the rains held off until 15 minutes before Saturday's scheduled close, and we had only brief periods of drizzle on Sunday. The weather cooperated all the way through breakdown as well. However, nearby areas did see significant weather, so you should not underestimate such issues here.

Overall, this was a very strong show and well attended by patrons who purchased. Most artists I spoke to did quite well, and smiles were abundant. Experience in running a show counts, and Dash/Rio Grande has the experience to make a successful event, even if it is the first one ever. This is a festival to watch, and I suspect that it will quickly become a significant show deserving to be in your schedule.



(Editor's note: A FastAudit compilation review of this show appeared in our July 2013 issue. Here is another perspective.)

► **April 20-21, Mainsail Arts**

Festival, St. Petersburg. Contact: Jane Ferguson, Mainsail Arts Festival Inc., PO Box 2842, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. Phone: 727-892-5885. Fax: 727-892-5372. Email: artistapplications@mainsailartsfestival.org. Website: www.mainsailart.org. Application fee: \$35. Space fee: \$275. Space size: 10x10. 100% outdoors. Exhibitors: 250. Attendance: 100,000 (source: event organizers).

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