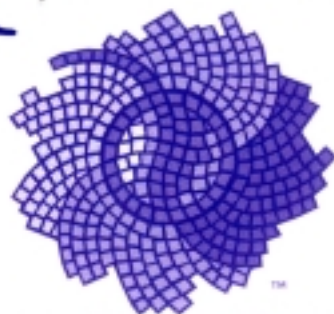


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Denver, Colorado July 3-5, 1999



CHERRY CREEK ARTS FESTIVAL



## Cherry Creek Hits #1 for the Third Year Running

Before we begin the review of the best fine crafts show in the country, we have a confession to make.

The 200 Best surveys were in. All nominees had been entered in a giant database. The numbers were ready to be crunched. We were excited. Everything was in; what would come out?

And the winner was . . . Cherry Creek. For the third year running.

We agonized. The numbers don't lie, but would our readership buy it? Would they accuse us of bias and preferential treatment? Once at number one — of course. Twice — maybe. But three times in a row in the top spot? How could any one show be that good?

Here's the confession: We groaned.

But here's part two of the confession: We're busy eating crow right now. Because as we got into our research, we discovered that as always, Cherry Creek had a few new tricks up its sleeve. David Pinson and staff have managed to leave us dizzy with admiration once again — not just for great sales, but for the style and class with which this show is run.

So what else is new?

Since its inception in 1991, the Cherry Creek Arts Festival has been a class act. Founder Bill Charney studied big-name arts festivals across the country and interviewed hundreds of artists to learn what works best before taking this one to the streets. His commitment to excellence extended to all aspects of the show,

from publicity, to promotional merchandise, to volunteer training, to the treatment of artists. No stone was left unturned; no "t" was left uncrossed.

In 1997, current director David Pinson arrived on the scene. Much head-shaking ensued. No one doubted Pinson's abilities (he came from the directorship of the Saint Louis Art Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, a top show in its own right). But Charney had left a big pair of shoes to fill. It was nearly inconceivable that a changing of the guard could occur without a stumble.

But change the guard did, and the march to success went — and goes — on.

Pretty much every conscious artist on the show circuit is aware of Cherry Creek's incredible reputation on a number of levels. Of primary concern, of course, is sales. Needless to say, they are made here in abundance. With plenty of young, affluent residents, the city of Denver boasts near-perfect demographics for a major art show. They turn out for this festival in numbers exceeding 350,000, and they come to buy.

You can put up with a lot of negatives when sales are this good. But that's exhibitors' next favorite thing about Cherry Creek: There are almost no negatives. Show management treats them like royalty, providing services that include great parking, hotel discounts, booth sitters, complimentary refreshments, an awards dinner on Friday night, and

more. But perhaps most important, it's service with a smile. Exhibitors are made to feel like honored guests rather than poor relatives.

It's wise of show management to adopt this attitude, because the quality of work shown here is nothing short of incredible. Few festivals could hope to attract a stable of artists this consistently excellent. Patrons expect the very best, and that's what they get.

So in the balance of power, it appears we have a three-way tie. Promoters are grateful for the exceptional arts and crafts. The great artists are here because the promoters are on the ball. The crowds come for fantastic art and a well-run festival with plenty of entertainment for the whole family. Everybody wins.

Yet another winner is the community. The Cherry Creek Arts Festival is dedicated to community service. It runs a golf tournament to benefit Arts in Action, the festival's own year-round arts outreach program. It publishes an "environmental blueprint" that serves as a model for other events seeking to operate in an ecologically responsible manner. It provides handicap-accessible show hours so those with disabilities can enjoy the show without fighting the crowds. The list goes on and on.

So let's get back to where we started with part three of the confession. We're impressed. We hope Cherry Creek keeps making us groan for years to come.



# 2

## SAN FRANCISCO ACC

San Francisco, California • August 11–15, 1999

The American Craft Council, the organization behind this event, is now 55 years old. ACC was founded to encourage craftspeople and to foster appreciation of their work.

They have certainly succeeded in that goal. Today American Craft Enterprises (the marketing arm of ACC) promotes a multitude of excellent shows around the country. These aren't your run-of-the-mill craft fairs. ACC shows feature the work of quality craftsmen in all media.

At 24 years of age, the San Francisco show is one of the oldest of ACC's offerings. And according to this year's survey, it's the best.

One of the reasons ACC shows post such high sales

figures involves the expectations of both craftsmen and attendees. These aren't your typical "browsing" shows. In fact, many ACC events (including this one) feature special wholesale days when only retail buyers may shop. These buyers are looking for quality goods, and they're often looking for bulk. They make the assumption that they're dealing with "pros" when they make their selections, and the exhibitors here live up to those expectations.

That wonderful "plus" about this show should also serve as a warning. Don't come here if you're not prepared to fulfill an unexpected bulk sale. But many craftsmen are ready and willing to take that delightful chance.

# 4

## SMITHSONIAN CRAFT SHOW

Washington, D.C. • April 15–18, 1999

Museum-quality fine craft from some of the most skilled artisans in the country is the hallmark of the Smithsonian Craft Show. And that's no idle boast by organizers. Many of the craftsmen in this show have works in museums and private collections around the country.

Now in its 16th year, the show presents one-of-a-kind and limited-edition pieces in basketry, ceramics, fiber, furniture, glass, leather, jewelry, metal, paper, wood, wearables, and mixed media.

Show organizers are proud of their event's reputation for quality, and they plan to keep it that way. Extraordinary care is taken with the jurying process. Each year three highly qualified jurors are brought in to sort through the more than

1,600 applications received. Work is selected according to both workmanship and level of artistic conception. So if you don't have a strong vision driving your work, chances are you'll be left out in the cold.

There's another goal to the jury process. You won't see the same thing at this show year after year, as you will at some other highly juried events. Many new artists are featured each year. Each is chosen because his or her work represents a new talent or trend.

It's not cheap to show here; booth space will run you as much as \$1,400. But the patrons expect high-ticket work, and they come prepared to spend. Attendance isn't high, but it's all quality.

# 3

## PORT CLINTON ART FESTIVAL

Highland Park, Illinois • August 28–29, 1999

Ask anyone about the success of the 14-year-old Port Clinton Art Festival, and they'll tell you the same thing. When director Amy Amdur gets hold of an issue, she won't let go. Combine her tenacity with an unrelenting demand for quality, and the result is the Port Clinton Art Festival — an event that has performed solidly on our 200 Best list since its inception. Not even a weeks-old baby daughter could slow Amdur down in 1997.

A distinguishing feature of this show is the exceptional quality of work displayed each year. The 1997 jury panel featured a nice mix of skills that included exhibiting artisans, a gallery owner, and a commercial graphic artist.

The balance of perspectives is evident in the work chosen.

The jury doesn't just do a good job with selecting quality work. They do a good job of balancing the show, too. Work prices run the gamut, and styles range from ultra-traditional to knock-your-socks-off contemporary.

It all sells. Crowds of 200,000 come from nearby Chicago to enjoy and to buy.

As at any show, there's bad mixed with the good. Exhibitors complain about set-up (easy if your booth is on or near the streets, a nightmare if you're in the courtyards). And artisans in the mall courtyard get less foot traffic. But most aren't complaining. They're just hoping to be lucky enough to get in.

# 5

## ANN ARBOR STREET ART FAIR

Ann Arbor, Michigan • July 21–24, 1999

It was business as usual in 1997 for the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair. In other words, quality of work was exceptional; crowds were large; sales were brisk; and artisans were happy, despite brutal heat.

This show is the oldest and most prestigious of the three concurrent Ann Arbor art fairs (the other two are the State Street Area Art Fair and the Michigan Guild's Summer Art Fair). Work accepted tends to be contemporary to modern, high-priced, and designed to appeal to the upper-end buyer. If you have museum-quality work in the three- to five-digit price range, you should apply only to this show.

Street Art Fair buyers tend to bypass the other two shows completely, heading straight

for the quality. They're not concerned about the attached high price tags.

The long hours and four-day run of all the Ann Arbor shows make them exhausting to work. It is strongly suggested that you bring help if you intend to exhibit at any one of the three shows. But the phenomenal sales to be made here are worth a little sleep deprivation.

The Street Art Fair's slight slip from last year's #2 ranking is probably due to a date change that confused patrons and eliminated many regular attendees. However, show organizers have developed a formula for determining future show dates. It is hoped that patrons will catch on quickly and return in their accustomed droves.