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talked to, sales consisted of items in the \$30-\$50 range or less, rather than high-ticket pieces.

Sunday started out with clouds that finally cleared when the wind picked up. Part of the show was tucked between tall buildings and ended up becoming a wind tunnel. The other block had a park at one end and shorter buildings that blocked the wind while letting a breeze flow over us, so exhibitors in that area were much less impacted. By the middle of the afternoon, exhibitors in the northern block had had enough, and the promoter came over to help those who needed to break down to avoid breakage. I must admit that Sullivan is a hands-on promoter who sees the show as a partnership of efforts that benefit both parties. He makes a very concerted effort to be on site, involved and on top of whatever needs to be handled. He is very accessible, sends multiple e-mails to communicate with all artists and answers calls quickly to keep it all on track.

Sales ranged from weak to great – it depended on what you had. Because a lot of the customers were visitors from everywhere (including Europe), they had a hard time getting large pieces back home, but the smaller, easy-to-carry stuff did much better. There are always exceptions, though, such as the woodworker across from me who had no sales on Saturday but made a couple of large sales on Sunday, which turned his show around in minutes.

So hang in there. The market is coming back, just in its own time. I have observed that the booths that have enough space to allow customers to easily come in and out seem to get more attention. Booths that are colorful and aren't cluttered or messy attract shoppers long enough for them to truly see your work and not just gaze as they go by. Until next time ...

► **January 30-31, Naples Invitational Art Fest, Naples.**
 Contact: Jill Spanbauer, Eden Florida Institute for Autism, PO Box 955, Naples, FL 34106. Phone: 239-263-1667. Fax: 239-263-3545. E-mail: naplesedenfest02@aol.com. Web site: www.edenartfest.com. Application fee: \$35. Space fee: \$395. 100% outdoors. Exhibitors: 107. Attendance: 30,000. Admission: \$5.

By Carl Buehler
 SA Senior Writer
 E-mail: gems@jewelgallery.net
 Medium: Jewelry

Wow, what a difference a change in layout (afforded by a 50-percent reduction in the number of artists) makes! A simplification of prior years' confusing layout combined with improved media promotion resulted in a record turnout that made for smiles all around. Artists brought in sales all day Saturday and even made out on a cool, dreary-skied Sunday. A turn of unexpected fortune to say the least, what with good reports from many other Florida shows in January, this sure does get our hopes up for the spring forward.

Who would have thought that a show committee would listen to artists and make the suggested changes that ended up making this show one of the best of the season? And who was it who made the decision? The Eden Florida Institute festival committee, that's who. They took the brave move of cutting the number of exhibitors in half, making it possible to set up the show in a closed circle with artists on both sides of a wide sidewalk circling Fleischmann park. There were no dead ends, ravines or exhibitors lost out in space, just a simple loop with one entrance so every artist received the same exposure. Once fairgoers walked in, they walked the circle, giving every booth a look.

Painter Charles Ross loved the new layout and said his customers did too. "For once they could find me and not get lost in the meandering maze," he said. Yes, that was indeed the problem in past years, but now the show is so simple and beautiful.

Setup is available from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday. The site is fairly level, but it's wise to bring shims for setup on the grass. Most locations have plenty of extra space behind for storage and extensions. Breakdown is not too bad, given the wide walkways for easy rolling.

No, you can't drive into the park, but you don't need to. Artist parking is in the adjoining school and baseball parking lot.

Right across the street from the Coastland Mall, Fleischmann Park itself is sweet, with a large children's playground in the center and nearby baseball, tennis, and skateboard parks that make for an exciting location with lots of traffic. There is plenty of energy here.

The show's name is appropriate because it appears that the fairgoers themselves are by invitation only. The show drew a select crowd of locals who live in annual anticipation of this event. They pay \$5 at the gate, and they *want* to be here, both to help support the Eden Institute for Autism and to buy art. This is north Naples, where gated communities and large homes abound with plenty of walls and floor space needing a little dressing up – not to mention that women are out shopping for fine jewelry and accessories.

Jewelers were happy at this year's show, even when located together on what several shoppers dubbed "jewelry corner." A sidewalk connecting the playgrounds crossed the show path, with a jeweler set up on each corner and another nearby. It was like a major intersection with four gas stations, except we had three

14K jewelers and two sterling-silver jewelers, and we were *all* busy.

Kim Koch of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, won the \$500 Award of Excellence with his solid bezel-set gemstones in 14K gold. Another jeweler asked me not to say how good the show was. Oops!

The 2-D work at this show has always been high quality. I sat down for lunch on a slower Sunday. In one moment, a couple came walking by on my right with two original paintings, while on my left Mark Brown wrapped up another two of his classic award-winning still-life oils.

A clothing artist and a driftwood furniture exhibitor both had great shows (as defined in the current market). I made \$3,900, half of my take a decade ago but good enough today. My neighbor, painter Rachel Kennedy, was a hoot, dancing the jig and demonstrating how she puts lively color into her work at 75! And speaking of those in their 70s, yes, this was a show for the seniors of Naples. There were no yuppies among the show-goers, unless they were over 50 or 60 and had disposable income.

Ceramicist sculptor Scott Causey sold four of his major pieces to one buyer late on Sunday, and given the value of his work, that is a major sale! His art features some of the most unusual and colorful interpretations of nature and imaginary creatures.

Several artists noted that Saturday alone was as good as a two-day show. Sunday was slowed by overcast skies and cold, but, hey, it wasn't as cold as Wisconsin's 4-degree temperature.

The show offers \$5,000 in artist awards, plus \$5,000 in patron-purchase money. Artists can give back by donating to the silent auction directly benefiting the Eden Institute's autism program, which provides fairgoers with another buying opportunity.

Show fees increased this year, but that was more than offset by the increased sales shared between fewer exhibitors. The only thing I have to say to the show staff other than thanks is please do not change a thing! What, I have never said that before?

(For a different perspective on this show, see the following review.)

► **January 30-31, Naples**

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Left: Painter Tom Ross (center) talks to members of the Naples Invitational staff, including Jill Spanbauer (left), after winning Best in 2-D. Above: Crowds make their way around the new, circular layout.

Invitational Art Fest, Naples. See the previous review for contact information.

By Mike Albin

Tennessee & National Reporter

E-mail: mike@mikealbin.com

Medium: Landscape photography

This was the fifth year for Patty and me at this well-organized show. Setup is on Friday and parking

is close (in a nearby lot), but you should bring a dolly. Check-in is right up front and is coordinated by a cheerful staff of people ready to help in any way they can. This is one of those shows we look forward to participating in every year. It's in a great location, and the patrons are art savvy and ready to purchase.

The first thing we noticed about the 13th annual show was

there were a lot fewer artists. In fact, as Carl Buehler mentioned in his review, the show was cut in half. I spoke with director Jill Spanbauer about the reduced size, and she said that, with the slower economy, she thought artists would do better if there were fewer of them.

The show's new layout consisted of one large circle with artists on both sides. It was very easy for patrons to walk the circle and see the entire show, as there were no dead spots or signs touting "additional artists this way!" Spanbauer also said that, in another new move, they hired a public-relations firm to help promote the show. Judging by the size of the crowds on Saturday, it was plain to see that the PR firm did its job.

The weather was absolutely beautiful on Saturday, and the crowds came out in full force. Sunday was a bit cooler and overcast, with a slight chance of rain. Crowds were much lighter on Sunday, but the people who did come were still buying. Every artist I spoke with said he or she had a good show except one painter doing his first show.

I saw lots of both 2-D and

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3-D pieces going by our booth all weekend long. A sculptor reported a well-above-average show while a jeweler reporter a slightly above-average event. A painter was pleased with his about-average total, and a woodworker said sales were about average for him too.

If you sell larger items, be prepared to ship. A lot of the patrons at this show have two or three homes, and they buy artwork for their houses up North. You can make an extra sale or two if you offer to ship your work.

Breakdown went about as smoothly as it could, and it was much easier with fewer artists. The parking lot in front of the park is usually overcrowded with everyone trying to leave at the same time, but this year there were plenty of empty spaces. There was even room for artists like us with large trucks pulling trailers to get close enough to dolly. It took us an hour and 5 minutes to break down completely, and we were on our way.

All artists I spoke with said they would return except for the aforementioned newbie painter. Patty and I will definitely be back again and again, as long as they'll keep having us.

► **January 30-31, Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale's National Art Festival, Fort Lauderdale.** Contact: Richard Sullivan, Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale's National Art Festival, PO Box 990, Fort Lauderdale, FL 34106. Phone: 954-262-0239 or 239-293-9448. Fax: 954-262-0203. E-mail: moaflartfestival@moafl.org or boulderbrookproductions@gmail.com. Web site: www.moafl.org or www.boulderbrook.net. Application fee: \$30. Space fee: \$375-\$750. Space size: 10x12 to 12x20. 100% outdoors. Exhibitors: 50. Hours: 10-5. Attendance:

10,000 (2009 gate). Admission: \$2.

By JoAnn Wedge
California & Florida Reporter
 E-mail: joannsglass@hotmail.com
 Medium: Fused-glass jewelry

Winter was not over yet in Florida when this show took place, but this being the last weekend of the month, the weather was getting better. Unfortunately, this show (one of many held at this location) did not do better.

Layout was a problem. The director of the show, Richard Sullivan, tried to explain to the people at the Museum of Art that splitting up the booths into pods of six facing four different directions was confusing and highly irregular for the customers. I received several complaints myself from customers who said they could not remember what they had seen and what they had missed. Even though Sullivan tried to suggest a straight-flow layout from the front of the museum across the park to the front of the stage area, it was not accepted. With the layout that was used, many artists felt like they were not seen by all the buyers – and their sales proved them right.

Many were so upset at the layout that they said they would not return, even though this show and others at this location had done well for them before.

The other concern many artists had was the size of the show. With only 50 exhibitors, this looked like a small show, and that may have been a determining factor in the eyes of the public.

On the plus side, load-in and -out were easy, as you could drive right to your booth. Parking was paid for by the director. Regular-sized vehicles could park in the parking garage next to the show site while larger vehicles were assigned a nearby parking lot.

A small band played music on Saturday afternoon, and they were pretty good. They played Beatles music, but the sound was so loud that artists had to scream at their customers to make a sale. Even though the director asked for the volume to be turned down four or five times, it was turned down slightly just once and was too loud the rest of the time. The radio station, 102.7 FM, was also there, playing oldies and popular tunes at a nice level that everyone enjoyed after the band left and on Sunday.

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