

## **The History of Art on Main**

The inception of Art on Main began in 1959 from Mrs. Grace Etheridge's desire to bring art to the schools of Henderson County. The result was a show exhibiting the students' art in the lobby of the historic Skyland Hotel at 538 North Main Street (where in the 1920's F. Scott Fitzgerald resided). Mrs. John Forrest, active in the arts at the time, judged the show. Today the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of this same edifice is the home of the Arts Council of Henderson County.

In 1960, Mrs. Etheridge formed the Art League of Henderson County becoming its first president. The Hendersonville Woman's Club was responsible for the annual art show moving it to the sidewalk for a half a block in front of the hotel utilizing the green benches on Main Street to display the art. The show included works from the Art League members and local students. The Hendersonville Sidewalk Art Show was born.

During the early '70's the name of the show was changed to the Mrs. John Forrest Memorial Sidewalk Sale in order to honor Mrs. Forrest's involvement with the arts.

In 1989 the show grew to include eight blocks of Main Street. The committee began advertising for artists and to the public. A silent auction was initiated to raise money for the following year to cover the costs of advertising.

In 1991 the Art League of Henderson County began producing the show. The show was a great opportunity and platform for the League's members to display and sell their 2D (two dimensional) work. Around this time the show was extended to 10 blocks to accommodate the 121 artists (mainly Art League Members), 30 of whom came from 16 states.

The budget, in 1996, was able to cover the costs of advertising allowing the annual Silent Auction's profits to be gifted to the schools of Henderson County as initially envisioned by Mrs. Etheridge. A juried competition with a first place award of \$1,000 in prize money was also established.

2000 celebrated the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Sidewalk show in Hendersonville where it again covered 10 blocks of Main St., 14 artists from other states. Musical entertainment was provided while patrons dined or browsed through the Silent Auction. Participants placed bids on 35 2Dimensional works donated by the Art League, proceeds continued to go to the county's schools. A drawing was held at the Gazebo on Main Street for 5 hand colored prints. There were 8000 guests who visited the show.

Since 2004 Art on Main has been produced by The Arts Council of Henderson County, which introduced several changes. The media parameters have been expanded to include fine art and fine craft. Artists apply and are juried for quality in their body of work and professionalism in their presentation.

2009 is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Art on Main (now a three-day show), which is the opening anchor for “The Arts Council Presents...” a 10 day celebration of all of the arts and culture in Henderson County. The developing vision for Art on Main is to embrace all of the arts (two & three dimensions, music, dance, storytelling, and other performance art) in order to draw a larger segment of the community downtown – to involve, expose and educate people to the many facets of art – while maintaining a high quality. The Art League still participates annually by organizing the Silent Auction to support art programs in Henderson County Schools.

The opening Day of Art on Main, Friday October 2<sup>nd</sup>, is also historic downtown Hendersonville’s “First Friday,” when local galleries and merchants create a festive community atmosphere, remaining open until 9pm and often serving wine and cheese.