

Accessibility 2011: *Escape!*

The Sumter County Cultural Commission and the Sumter County Gallery of Art are pleased to announce **Accessibility 2011: *Escape!***, Sumter's 12th annual exhibition of public installation art opening November 11th, 2011. The annual Accessibility exhibitions feature contemporary art that is installed in and around Main Street businesses, alleys, unoccupied buildings, sidewalks and other "public" areas of Sumter's historic downtown area. This highly regarded contemporary art exhibition is considered by many to be one of the most important art events in South Carolina and aims to cultivate dynamic interest in the Sumter and regional art scenes.

Accessibility 2011: *Escape!* will focus on **interactive** and community-based projects as well as site-specific art installations of varying mediums. Selected installation artists will be invited to create work in and around downtown Sumter. The artist's chosen will be working in a public forum in the Sumter community, providing many unique opportunities for the public to gain insight into the 'process' of installation art and for social interaction with the visiting artists. Frank McCauley, Assistant Director and Chief Curator for the Sumter County Gallery of Art, is the curator for his years Accessibility project.

Installation art proposals, interactive new media works, films and videos (not in excess of 15 minutes) are requested for submission.

Deadline: Ongoing - earlier entries will be given preference.

Guidelines for installation projects:

The proposed projects should prompt the viewer to act, and be meant to be touched, heard, or experienced, as well as viewed. Installations should require human interaction to complete the piece and prompt viewers to interact with one another.

ALL MEDIA will be considered for the **Accessibility 2011: *Escape!*** installation art component. No entry fee is required. Please submit a proposal that includes 10 - 20 jpg images numbered on a CD/DVD. Please include a hard copy of the numbered image checklist (Include: title, media, dimensions, and date), artist statement, bio, resume/cv, and cover letter that describes proposed installation. SASE required for return of application materials.

Guidelines for films and videos:

Duration: under 15.00 minutes. Formats Accepted: DVD (NTSC). All types of independent/non-commercial work are accepted: experimental, documentary, narrative, non-narrative, political, personal, etc... International and Domestic submissions are encouraged. Please include: Synopsis, Bio, CV and Contact Information. SASE required for DVD return.

Send submissions to:

Frank McCauley
Curator
Accessibility 2011
PO Box 1316
Sumter, SC 29151

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History of Sumter’s Accessibility Project

The city of Sumter is a small mostly rural community of nearly forty thousand inhabitants that has recently become home to some of the most innovative and cutting-edge art events taking place in South Carolina. Sumter, the geographic center of the state is now also identified as an “epicenter” for the new and avant-garde in the region. There is a dichotomy present in this ostensibly typical southern town, on that is grounded on traditional values and life styles, but is also the venue for the southeast's longest running and most successful series of exhibitions featuring public installation art.

During the fall of 1998 the Sumter community experimented with their first installation art project which has subsequently evolved into a high profile annual event that has featured the site-specific artworks of over one hundred and twenty-six national and international artists. Typically, the work was installed in non-traditional, public venues located throughout Sumter’s historic downtown district. This innovative annual art event, titled Accessibility, was initially ignored by the community but has grown in significance and meaningfulness and is not only tolerated by the local population but is now supported, conceptually and financially, by both City and County governments as well as by the private sector. The project that started as an experiment in 1998 is now fully integrated into the fabric of the Sumter community.

The numerous Accessibility projects have connected thoroughly with the Sumter community in part because of the very nature of site-specific art, it is artwork that is specific, responsive and ‘connects’ to places, people and things. In 2003 the project focused exclusively on Sumter’s unique culture, history and environment. The curator for Accessibility2003 exhibition, New York artist, Jane Ingram Allen, made an international “call” that requested prospective artists to submit proposals based on the theme “from the outside in.” Artists interested in participating were then required to visit

Sumter and further develop a proposal that was based on their interpretations, impressions and visions of the Sumter community, to define Sumter through their “Sumter-specific” art.

Allen’s concept, “From the Outside in,” proved to be very successful on many levels, but most importantly it provided a real and viable connection between art and community. The artists’ residencies provided opportunities for locals to meet, socialize and to discuss everything from cultures to art theory and practice with the national and international visitors; the “process” heavy and labor intensive site-specific art required many ‘extra hands’ and provided ample opportunities for area residents to gain a real insight into ‘how’ art was done.

The Accessibility2004 exhibition was also formulated around the concept of “Sumter-specific” art and included a month-long residency by famed South Carolina topiary artist Pearl Fryar who worked side by side with over 450 Sumter area students providing them each with an invaluable opportunity to see, touch and connect with art. Hopefully, these early ‘connections’ with art and the ‘process’ of the arts will ultimately help cultivate and develop future audiences who appreciate and understand the role of the arts in the society.

Accessibility project directors plan to continue working within the basic theme and framework of “art that defines a community” and will focus on site-specific installation art that involves and includes the entire community in both concept and process of the arts, art that helps define a community.