ART SHOW HAS ARTISTS

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Staff Writer

LAFAYETTE — Fire! It's dangerous. It's fascinating. It warms our world and fuels our imagination. And it's used as a tool to shape objects of art.

Pyromania is the irresistible urge to start fires. It is also the name of an event celebrating the fire arts. It will take place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday in Girard Park.

Tyrona Devalcourt of the Acadiana Art Association said it will be the third such event and will feature professional artists from throughout Louisiana and several neighboring states doing demonstrations in glass, metal, clay, welding and wood burning. Many of the demonstrations will be set up on the pavilion and others will have their own tents, so even if it rains, the show will go on.

The event is underwritten by an arts grant funded by the Louisiana State Arts Council and Division of the Arts, administered by the Acadiana Arts Council.

Crowley artist Simone Little is a veteran of previous Pyromania events. "The focus of Pyromania is to educate the public about the fire arts, how art is created through different fire techniques. A lot of people don't understand the processes and have a fear of the processes."

Many of the artists there will give hands-on demonstrations in which visitors will have the opportunity to actually learn by doing.

"It's a free weekend and there will be lots of demonstrations going on in all areas," Devalcourt said.

Pyromania
Where: Girard Park
When: Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Artist Annette Aucoin shows some jewelry and other small pieces of metal art that she created.

Little serves as the coordinator for the glass division. She and other artists will do demonstrations on bead-making and glass blowing.

"An average person could do bead working and lamp working at home and not have a big expense," Little said. "Lamp working" refers to shaping glass objects through a small torch called a "lamp." "You move the lamp in front of the torch to make a bead or small piece of fire sculpture." At the event, Little will demonstrate glass blowing, while artist Ellen Cahill will demonstrate bead working.

A number of ceramics techniques will be demonstrated at Pyromania, including raku. "Raku is a low-fire process that originated in Japan many years ago," said ceramicist Teddie Irwin. "Raku pieces were made in tea ceremonies, then broken. Irwin makes ornamental pieces, like bowls, vessels and ginger jars. "They're not utilitarian at all," she said.

"We've Americanized it," Irwin said. "We put pieces in the kiln while it's so hot you can almost see through it. We put it in a pan filled with combustible material, which will burst into flames and let it stay there about 30 minutes."

"The burning produces different decorative effects on the ceramic piece. You rarely have two pieces that look alike," Irwin said.

Devalcourt said that at the demonstration, artists will show how to construct makeshift kilns out of old trash cans and drums. "We want to show that you don't have to spend a lot of money to do this," she said.

Ron Kern will give visitors the opportunity to learn the art of wood burning. He began using an iron as a burning tool and now often uses a propane torch to create landscapes on wood.

"I've also experimented with taking water and Cifroxx and bleaching the wood instead of burning. When wood is wet, you get a gray effect sometimes," he said. "I also have a beehive burner which I use frequently to get certain colors."

Kern has four wood burners for visitors to use to create their own designs. The only restriction is that participants must be at least 8 years old. "At 7, (the wood burning tool) becomes a ray gun."

Annette Aucoin will demonstrate metal-working. Aucoin makes copper bowls, pins, necklaces and kitchen cutlery.

"There will be several metal smiths there," she said. "We'll be sand-casting and giving demonstrations in soldering, forming metal, fusing and doing torch-fired enamels. "We'll also demonstrate chain-making and cuttlebone casting."

Visitors will also have the opportunity to do a little metal working, including cuttlebone casting, in which molten metal is poured into molds made of processes and brains.

Little said the public's reaction to last year's event has made many of the artists eager to do a repeat performance.

"The response was tremendous. The people like the fire and the excitement," Little said.

For more information, call the Lafayette Art Association at 269-0363.

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