

Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area

Press Release

SPRING CITY: Art competition and exhibit makes one of nation’s “prettiest towns” worth many thousands of words—and a visit.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the small, central Utah town of Spring City will be worth about 120,000 of them on Saturday, Sept. 10.

That’s when an anticipated 120 paintings of scenes in and around the town will be on display at the town’s art gallery.

Depicting scenery associated with the town is not the only thing the paintings will have in common, though. Each and every one of them will have been started and completed in the three days prior to the exhibit, during the city’s annual Plein Air Competition.

“En plein air” is French for “in the open air,” and is used to describe the once-popular craft of painting outdoors.

“Spring City has earned a reputation as an artist colony in Central Utah,” says Chris Anderson, chairman of Spring City Arts, a consortium of the town’s resident artisans. “Painters from throughout the state and region enjoy coming here to paint the beautiful landscapes, animals and pioneer architecture in this well-preserved example of a pioneer township.”

On Wednesday-Friday, Sept. 7-9, approximately 60 artists will descend on tiny Spring City to contemplate those local scenes, and then recreate them on canvas.

While the competition those three days is for artists, its culmination on Saturday is an event for artists, art lovers, and culture and heritage enthusiasts alike.

Plein Air Exhibit

Each of the paintings created during the competition will be on display at the art gallery, which is run by Spring City Arts.

Following an awards ceremony loosely scheduled around 9 or 9:30 Saturday morning, the gallery will be open between 10 a.m.-4 p.m. that day. Each of the paintings will also be for sale.

Chairman Anderson says some of Utah’s better-known artists are expected at the competition: Randall Lake, George Handrahan, and Linda Curley Christensen, who has painted murals in LDS temples, to name just a few.

New to the Plein Air competition and exhibit this year is an event to give non-artists a taste of

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what plein-air art is all about.

“During the morning on Saturday there will be a quick-paint: just two hours to paint a painting and put it up,” Anderson says. “This way the people who come down on Saturday can get a glimpse of that.”

Spring City Art Studio Tour

Saturday’s visitors can also get a glimpse of what local artists do the other 361 days of the year by taking a tour of the many art studios in town.

“More than 20 Spring City artists will have their studios open for tour, so you can meet them, see where they work and enjoy their art,” Anderson says.

The low, worth-the-price cost of \$10 gets tour-goers a pass to the studios on the tour, along with a map of their locations in town, all of them within walking distance.

The tour features more than just painters, making for a fascinating experience with a variety of art and craft forms: painters, pottery makers, weavers, even a chair-maker and an artist who creates intriguing art out of gourds (yes, the inedible vegetables) will all have their wares on display.

Spring City artist Lynn Farrar says “People really do like to meet artists, especially if they like their work. This is a great opportunity to hang out and see where the creative process takes place, and talk with the artists about how they do what they do. And also it’s a chance to pick up a nice piece of art, something that’s really a great, original piece of art.”

Farrar, who goes by the pseudonym “Sophie Soprano” when she creates more fanciful, illustration-type art that greatly appeals to children, says the studio tour can be a wonderful family activity. “For kids it a fun thing. Almost all kids like to draw, so it’s fun for them and see where people are painting.”

For another \$8 or so, a full Dutch-oven lunch will be available. Individual food items will also be sold a la carte.

History and Heritage

In addition to the art and the artists, the town itself and its environs are worth seeing. Spring City—in its entirety—is listed on the National Historic Register, one of a very few towns to have that distinction.

The town, by design, has retained much of its mid-19th Century pioneer flavor.

“There are lots of historic homes and other structures, like barns,” says Farrar, who moved to the town a few years ago in large part because of that very characteristic. “Unfortunately, we do have modern houses,” she laughs, “But a lot of us who are painters here live in historic houses. It’s just a fun place to visit.”

Spring City, just off of U.S. Highway 89 in Sanpete County, is also part of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area, Utah’s one and only federally-designated heritage area.

In addition, Spring City was named on Forbes Magazine’s 2010 list of “America’s Prettiest Towns.”

Helping people get around to see that prettiness and heritage, and perhaps contributing to that sense of heritage, will be carriage rides (mule-drawn, however, rather than horse-drawn) during the tour. The rides will be accompanied with narration about the town, its places and history.

For more information about the competition, exhibit or tour, contact Spring City Arts Chairman Chris Anderson:

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