

PRESS RELEASE

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THE 17TH ANNUAL HILDENE FALL ARTS FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 2, 3, & 4

HILDENE'S MEADOW

MANCHESTER, VT

With the waning of summer and the beginning of foliage, Vermont welcomes fall with a plethora of festivals and events. Among the more famous and well attended is the Hildene Fall Arts Festival, October 2 through 4 in Manchester, Vermont. The show draws tourists who plan their foliage pilgrimage to coincide with the dates. It also serves area residents from the Albany area and the nearby Berkshires in Massachusetts. More than 10,000 craft aficionados attend each year.

Even in a year of a slumping economy, expectations are high. The American public has reprioritized its shopping. Shopping as a sport no longer is relevant. As farmers' markets have proliferated, malls are increasingly quiet. People want real things at a fair price. They want to meet the grower of the vegetables; they like to buy CSA shares of a side of grass fed beef; they want to meet the "pig" going into their freezer for the winter; and they are ordering dinnerware from their local potter. Handmade goods are once again in vogue. In the age of Twitter and Blackberries, baby beets and goat's milk cheese from the local farm are being served on a platter from the pottery studio up the road.

While artists and artisans have suffered due to economic changes, they have quickly adapted. Beginning a few years back, the wholesale market collapsed and shops and galleries stopped ordering handmade goods. Craftspeople made up for the shortfall by attending more retail shows like the Hildene Arts Festival. Tim Cianciola, Craftproducers President, estimates \$800,000 worth of art and craft work sold in the three days. "Our exhibitors need this show. They depend on making several thousand dollars here. Basically they are at a fair every weekend between Labor Day and Christmas. If they don't do well in the fall, the winter will be miserable for them."

Since this event is the economic backbone for so many, it is competitive to get a space. Applicants are juried to ensure creativity and to ascertain that they are indeed the designers and makers of the products. These artisans maintain their own customer lists and often offer enticing incentives to draw their patrons to the show. The public relishes a continuing relationship with the artists. In fact, the majority of the audience is repeat attendees.

While purchasing Art and Crafted items is the main draw, the Festival is also a fun-filled family event. For the adults, there is the Vermont Cheese, Beer, and Sausage Tent. Now in its second year, this popular “festival within a festival” offers an appetizing array of craft beers, artisan cheeses, and succulent sausages. The food court will also showcase a Vermont Pig Roast prepared by Candeleros restaurant. Numerous other edible options are available from vegetarian cuisine to goat curry. The Bistro Henry Wine Bar will serve “ABC” (Anything But Chardonnay, Anything But Cabernet) Wines from South America. For the kids there are wood fired pizzas, Vermont hamburgers and hot dogs, and Wilcox Ice Cream.

No Festival worthy of its name lacks entertainment. Reggie’s Red Hot Feet Warmers will parade about playing and singing Dixieland tunes. No one can resist their timeless charm and the urge to swing and sway to classic New Orleans style music. Peter Blanchette, the Archguitar Virtuoso, will also play intermittently all three days. From Bach to Bosa Nova, from Fellini to Christmas music, Blanchette seduces his fans with his passionate innovative interpretations. He is a master marketer as well: he always has his “latest” CD. Numerous craft demonstrations are staged to educate the public that all works for sale are actually made by the person in the booth.

The Hildene Arts Festival runs 10-5 daily, Friday through Sunday, October 2, 3, & 4. Adult admission is \$8, youth are \$2, and children are free. Parking is convenient and free. Weekend passes cost \$10. No pets. For complete detailed information, consult www.craftproducers.com.