

Connection to earth draws together artists for Spirit of the Land

Story Photos - [Click to Enlarge](#)



³Marsh Pond² by Alan Campbell is the signature piece for this year's Spirit of the Land.

| | Story updated at 11:20 PM on Wednesday, March 21, 2007

The Athens Land Trust and Oconee River Land Trust are jointly presenting the third annual art show, sale and fundraiser Sunday through March 31, at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia.

A dessert reception will open the exhibit from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday in the conservatory, with the sale continuing throughout the week. The main event is 7-10 p.m. March 31 in the Garden Club of the Georgia Terrace Room at the garden.

Live music by Tin Cup Prophette, hors d'oeuvres by Dondero's Kitchen, and wine tasting through Gosford Wine will be featured. Prizes from area businesses, restaurants and performers - including a signed photograph by Michael Stipe used on the cover of R.E.M.'s "New Adventures in Hi-Fi" - will be auctioned.

The show and sale is open to the public, with Saturday's event costing \$35 in advance or \$40 at the door.

Tickets are available at Gosford Wine, Homeplace Gifts and both land trust offices. Call (706) 552-3138 or (706) 613-0122 for more information. Proceeds are split between the conservation groups and participating artists.

Bluegrass on the Bridge

An afternoon of art and music to benefit The Oconee River Land Trust is planned from 2 to 6 p.m. Saturday at The Seasons, 310 Research Drive off College Station Road. A \$10 donation is requested to attend, with all donations going to The Oconee River Land Trust conservation nonprofit. Sponsors include The Seasons, Mercury Art Works, Terrapin Beer Company and Plexus Web Creations. For information, call (706) 255-9235.

BYLINE1:By Erin Rossiter

BYLINE2:erin.rossiter@onlineathens.com

Forget tea parties, dress up and doll babies.

As a young girl, Toni Carlucci played hide-and-seek with Mother Nature.

"I just spent every chance I could in the woods," the Athens resident and art teacher said. "I spent a lot of time looking under rocks, looking at plants, at flowers, at trees and into the sky. That was one of my favorite things to do."

She still hikes the land, especially near her home, located off the beaten path in Kenney Ridge subdivision.

And once a year, Carlucci counts on creating an artful portrait unearthed from within herself for the "Spirit of the Land."

This year, her painted vision includes "Red Tulips."

"I tried to make it a real warm painting," she said. "And I wanted to do red tulips, because the red seemed like life."

Having an affinity for nature is often a common denominator for artists who participate in the week-long Spirit show and sale at the State Botanical Garden benefiting the Oconee and Athens land trusts.

It is also required as subject matter.

But you'll see the inspiration is not a stretch for most of the 26 artists whose work will be exhibited Sunday through March 31. Anything outside and under the sun and the moon count as subject matter.

"We're celebrating the spirit of the land, so the artwork should, too," said René Shoemaker, who is the curator of the show and directs the Owens Library and Circle Gallery at UGA. "We're trying to keep all the themes to the Southeast also. It's exciting, because sometimes it's coastal, sometimes it's mountainous, sometimes it's piedmont and sometimes it's something else."

This is the third year of the festival, which will include an opening reception at 1 p.m. Sunday. But the main fundraising event will take place at 7 p.m. March 31 at the Garden Club of Georgia Headquarters House at the botanical garden.

Live music and auctions will be paired with hors d'oeuvres and wine tasting. Proceeds from the sale of artworks will be split between the 26 participating artists and the sponsoring conservation causes.

The event raised roughly \$20,000 the past two years, with more than 150 people attending each year, according to land trust newsletters.

Alan Campbell, nationally known for his naturalist artwork, made the signature piece for the display called "Marsh Pond." Another item expected to command a high dollar figure is a signed photograph by R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe. The image was used on the cover of the group's "New Adventures in Hi-Fi" album.

Prices likely will range anywhere from a couple of hundred dollars to a couple thousand depending on the artwork, according to price guidelines issued to artists.

Selling artwork is not something Carlucci regularly pays attention to. Last week, her tulip painting sat in her car parked outside the Lyndon House Arts Center, where she works part-time as art instructor.

The occupation takes up most of her creative energy, with worries over how best to display her own art taking a back seat, literally.

"It's in the car because I have to get it framed," she said, laughing a little.

Carlucci studied art education and fabric design, weaving her way to a master's of fine arts degree with a series of wall hangings that picture earth from space.

"Just that perspective of no boundaries," Carlucci said, explaining the work.

It's a theme she even carries into the studio in her home, where she logs about 10 hours a week. She wishes it were more.

"It was an unfinished room," Carlucci said, "and we finished it, painted the walls a nice coral color and forest green. So it would feel like we'd be outside."

Published in the Athens Banner-Herald on 032207