

CHARLESTON SCENE

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Reinvigorating the

Art Walk

New gallery group hopes to unite local galleries

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Santa Claws is coming to The Shacks

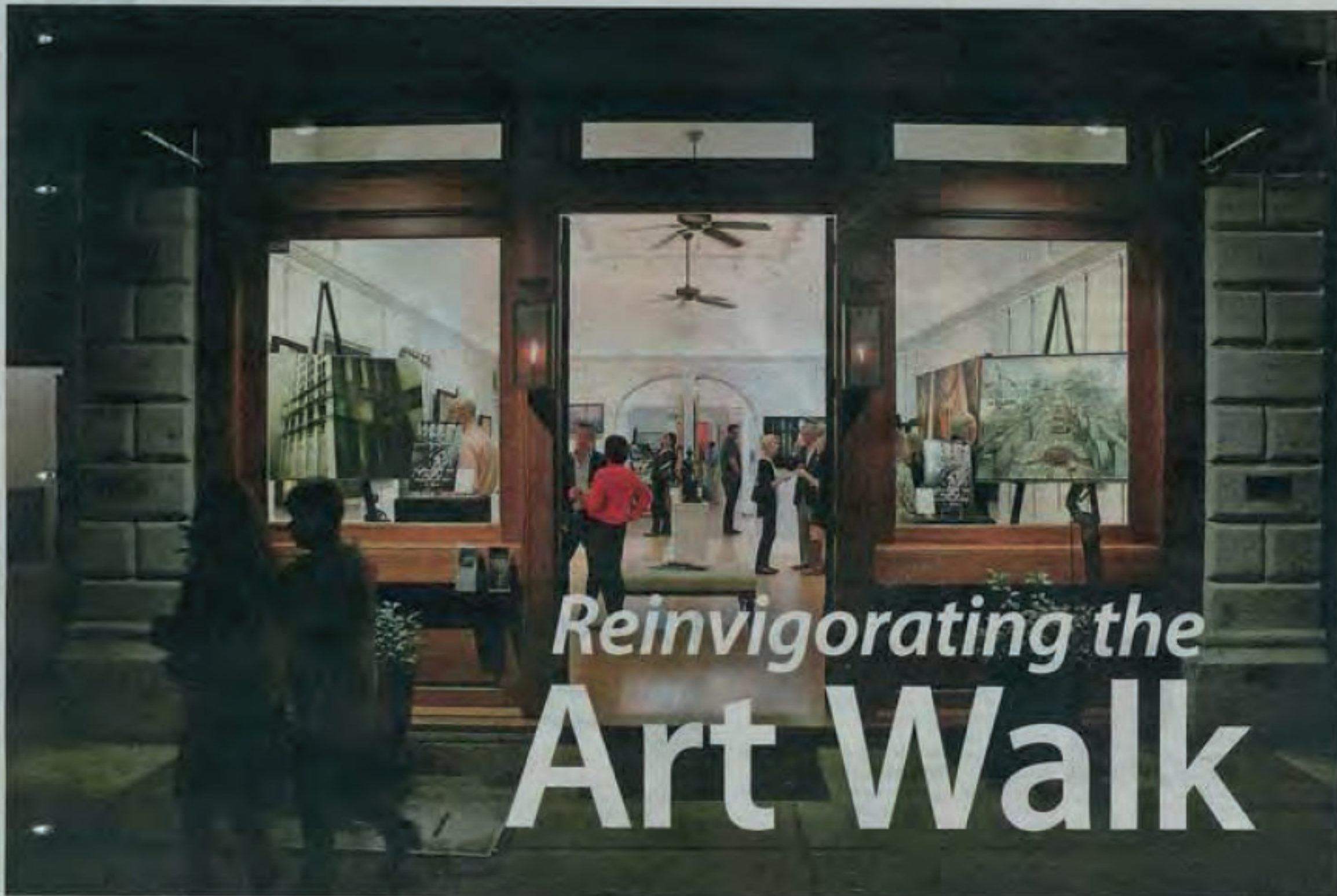
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COVERSTORY



Guests peruse the art at Principle Gallery on Meeting Street during a recent Art Walk event.

PROVIDED

If you go

WHAT: The Charleston Gallery Association, a new marketing group overseeing more than 40 galleries in downtown Charleston, is holding its second Art Walk this week. During the free event, participating galleries often debut new exhibits and typically serve refreshments such as hors d'oeuvres and wine to guests. The Art Walk does not have a specific beginning or end location; guests are encouraged to choose their own routes based on the association's map, located online and in pamphlets distributed to galleries, hotels and restaurants.

WHEN: 5-8 p.m. Friday
MOI: INFO: www.charlestongalleryassociation.com

New gallery group hopes to unite local galleries to promote event

BY ABIGAIL DARLINGTON
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When galleries in downtown Charleston put together the first Art Walk event nearly 25 years ago, the overall goal was to synchronize exhibit openings and invite the community to see what was going on in the local arts scene.

Often, the cluster of galleries in the lower part of the peninsula seemed dominated

by out-of-towners, so about 10 gallery owners in the French Quarter district decided to launch an event that primarily would appeal to local art enthusiasts and collectors.

On the first Friday evenings of March, May, October and December, galleries stayed open late and served complimentary wine and refreshments to attendees perusing the latest local artwork.

Please see **WALK**, Page E19



PROVIDED

Principle Gallery is among many local galleries that serve complimentary wine and snacks during the Art Walk event.

COVERSTORY continued

WALK from Page E19

By the mid-2000s, the Art Walk had become a highlight of Charleston's event calendar; the number of participating galleries had tripled. Sidewalks were so packed with art walkers, foot traffic often spilled into Broad, Church and Queen streets.

Lese Corrigan opened Corrigan Gallery on Queen Street in 2005, around the time the event was finding its stride.

"(The Art Walk) obviously made a difference, because we've grown from a small handful of artist studios and galleries to... this large arts community," she said.

In recent years, however, attendance during Art Walk events seems to have decreased, according to several gallery owners, raising the question of whether the quarterly event is still a viable strategy to promote the local art scene.

With that in mind, gallery groups such as the French Quarter Gallery Association and the Charleston Fine Art Dealers Association decided to join forces this summer as the Charleston Gallery Association, with the goal of uniting all the galleries on the peninsula under one flag.

As a more unified front, the association comprising more than 40 local galleries hopes to help the art community with marketing and breathe new life into the Art Walk events.

CHARLESTON GALLERY ASSOCIATION

1 Mitchell Hill
438 King St.
843.564.0034

2 Altman Studios
36 George St.
843.577.0047

3 The Ashbush Gallery
190 King St.
843.853.1100

4 Julia Santen Gallery
188 King St.
843.534.0758

5 LePrince Fine Art
184 King St.
843.442.1664

6 Reinert Fine Art
179 King St.
843.345.1785

7 The Sylvan Gallery
171 King St.
843.722.2172

8 The Sportman Gallery
165 King St.
843.727.1224

9 Atelier Gallery
153 King St.
843.722.5068

10 Mary Martin Gallery
103 Broad St.
843.723.8303

11 Grand Bohemian Gallery
55 Wentworth St.
843.722.5711

12 Principle Gallery: Charleston
125 Meeting St.
843.727.4500

13 Atrium Art Gallery
61 Queen St.
843.973.3300

14 Corrigan Gallery
82 Queen St.
843.722.8868

15 Studio 151 Fine Art
175 Church St.
843.579.9725

16 Gays Sanders Fisher Gallery
124 Church St.
843.658.0010

17 John C. Doyle Art Gallery
125 Church St.
843.577.7344

18 Birds I View Gallery
119 Church St. # A
843.723.1278

19 Ann Long Fine Art
54 Broad St.
843.577.0447

20 Ella Walton Richardson Fine Art
58 Broad St.
843.722.3880

21 Spencer Art Gallery I & II
55 & 57 Broad St.
843.722.6854

22 Coleman Fine Art
79 Church St.
843.853.7000

23 Dog & Horse Fine Art
102 Church St.
843.577.5500

24 Peabody Watercolors
102 Church St.
843.577.5500

25 Helena Fox Fine Art
106-A Church St.
843.723.0073



GO ONLINE FOR MORE CALENDAR OF EVENTS www.CharlestonGalleryAssociation.com

26 Edward Dore Gallery
31 Broad St.
843.853.5002

27 Coco Viro Fine Art
25 Broad St.
843.720.4027

28 Martin Gallery
18 Broad St.
843.723.7378

29 Cecil Byrne Gallery
7 Broad St.
843.720.3770

30 Ellis-Nicholson Gallery
1 1/2 Broad St.
843.722.5353

31 Stewart Fine Art Gallery
12 State St.
843.853.7100

32 Anglin South Fine Art
9 Queen St.
843.853.0708

33 Hagan Fine Art Gallery
27 1/2 State St.
843.754.0494

34 Horton Hayes Fine Arts
30 State St.
843.958.0014

35 Robert Lange Studios
2 Queen St.
843.805.8052

36 Courtyard Art Gallery
149 East Bay St.
843.723.9172

37 Lowcountry Artists
148 East Bay St.
843.577.9295

38 Charleston Artist Guild
160 East Bay St. #102
843.722.2425

39 Gordon Wheeler Gallery
180 East Bay St.
843.722.2546

Speed bumps

Although local attendance at the Art Walk was soaring about a decade ago, people weren't always showing up to view and buy art.

Free food and wine was a popular draw, and open container laws weren't enforced during the event, which meant attendees could move freely from one gallery to the next with drinks in their hands.

"In the old days, it was like 'Oh, we've got to go to so-and-so, they've got great food!'" Corrigan said, adding that large crowds became overwhelming at times. "It'd be more of a street party than anyone planned on."

But in 2008, police began stricter enforcement of the ban on open containers.

"When that started being enforced, there were probably fewer (attendees)," Corrigan said.

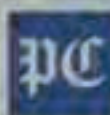
Many galleries started scaling back their food offerings after that, but Corrigan said that had more to do with the recession in the late 2000s than anything else.

Another change that could have affected attendance in recent years is that new galleries have spread to different parts of town, such as upper King Street, away from the walkable hub of fine art galleries in the French Quarter.

Then, clusters of galleries and art shops around town started holding their own events, such as First Fridays on Broad, or upper King Street's Design Walk, which happened more frequently and sometimes at the same time as the Art Walk event.

"What happened was, the art walk scene got pretty diluted," said Julie Dunn, the president

Photo gallery



For more photos from Reinvoigorating the Art Walk, go to postandcourier.com/galleries.

of the Charleston Gallery Association and the director of Atrium Art Gallery. "Meaning, people thought 'Well, they happen every month, so why not wait until the next month.' I think when galleries started to do their own thing and people thought everybody was open every month, that's when it felt it wasn't as special."

A new route

Given all the recent shifts in

Please see WALK, Page E20



ARIGAIL DARLINGTON/STAFF

Julie Dunn is the president of the Charleston Gallery Association and the director of Atrium Art Gallery on Queen Street.



PROVIDED

Mitchell Hill on upper King Street is an interior design shop and gallery that often showcases contemporary and abstract works by local artists. Recently, the shop showcased the "Drawn to Water" exhibit featuring local artists Hirona Matsuda, Lisa Shimko, and Trever Webster.

COVERSTORY continued

WALK from Page E19

the local gallery scene, Dunn and several other gallery owners believe the new, more inclusive association is a move in the right direction.

"There is something wonderful about seeing an umbrella association finally come together that includes all of the galleries," said Megan Lange of Robert Lange Studios. "The cross-pollination that is created from building an association like the Charleston Gallery Association is invaluable for the overall growth of the cultural scene."

Corrigan agreed, adding that she has high hopes for the new group.



PROVIDED

Mitchell Hill often draws a crowd to its upper King Street store with special events to celebrate exhibit openings.

"The first thing I want to see happen is (for) every gallery (to) be a part of the group, and that's just a matter of time and

some energy. And then, let's see what can be done as one unit. There are so many ways that visual art can impact a com-

"There are so many ways that visual art can impact a community."

Lese Corrigan

munity," she said.

Dunn said the group has already extended its reach to King Street, and hopes to continue adding gallery members across the peninsula. As more galleries join, she thinks the quarterly Art Walk will reassume its role as the main gallery event in

Please see WALK, Page E21

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COVERSTORY continued

WALK from Page E20

town.

Mitchell Hill, an interior design shop that also functions as a contemporary art gallery on upper King Street, is farther north than any of the other members of the Charleston Gallery Association. Tyler Hill, who co-owns the business with Michael Mitchell, said that being far away from most other downtown galleries "is definitely a challenge," but he sees the new Gallery Association as a way to bridge the gap between the two parts of town.



ABIGAIL DARLINGTON/STAFF

Atrium Art Gallery is among many galleries participating in the Charleston Gallery Association Art Walk that specializes in contemporary and abstract art.

"Hopefully ... it will reinvigorate everything associated with the Art Walk. We're excited. We've been waiting for it to get to upper King for so long, so I think it's going to help us a good bit," he said.

Aside from just bringing the event to different parts of town, Dunn said a major goal of the association is to function as a promotional group for Charleston's arts community. So far, the association has printed maps to all of its member galleries and

distributed them to local hotels and restaurants. A long-term goal is to look at tourism and other marketing opportunities outside of Charleston.

That's the part of the new group that's most exciting to Corrigan, who's been a part of Charleston's art scene for decades.

"People go to New York to buy art, they go to Santa Fe to buy art. There is a lot of room

for growth ... so that we can compete in the big market," she said. "The restaurants have gone and taken off, and if somebody says, 'I want to go some place in the world for a great meal,' Charleston is going to be on that list. Well, I want to see Charleston on that list for the arts, too."

Reach **Abigail Darlington** at (843) 937-5906.

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