

AMERICAN**Style**

2010 ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

# fairs & festivals



The St. James Court fountain offers festival goers a place to take a break at the center of the art show.

It's time to get your travel plans in order! **AMERICANStyle** presents the winners of our annual Top 10 Fairs and Festivals readers' poll, as well as a guide to some of the best art fairs in the country. The full calendar has moved online to become your ultimate yearlong reference—including a printable Flip Book. Go to [www.americanstyle.com](http://www.americanstyle.com) to page through our new interactive feature.

# WALKING THE WALK

BY CLAIRE PATTERSON BLOME

**READERS'  
POLL TOP  
10**

Our readers weighed in on their favorite shows in *AMERICANStyle*'s sixth annual Top 10 Fairs and Festivals competition, and the results are in—

Louisville stole the top two spots, winning voters over with its romantic historic district. The remaining favorites are scattered across the country, proving that fine American craft is ubiquitous. But because it can take time to fully explore every nook and cranny of a fair, it's best to have a plan before you hit the aisles. We've gone to the experts this year—show directors and promoters—for tips on how to get the most from each of our Top 10 shows.



Joan Rasmussen's "Dwight & Mamie" sit pretty at Francisco's Farm Arts Festival at Midway College.

## **1** Kentucky Crafted: The Market Louisville, Ky.

Kentucky Crafted: The Market is exactly what it appears to be—a state-centric celebration of more than 200 local and regional artisans. Chris Cathers, program branch manager of the Kentucky Arts Council, recommends starting at the 400 aisle. "Our exhibitors are not organized by medium," she explains. "So you will experience a wonderful mix of contemporary and traditional works." At the end of the aisle, you'll find frequent live performances at the Blue Moon Stage. Continue to walk through aisles 500 and 600, then return to the first, second and third for more works from bordering states. The market returns March 6-7. Visit <http://kycraft.ky.gov> for a \$3-off-admission coupon.



# Shaking It Up

Festivals rise and fall in readers' favor. Compare the rankings over the past three years.

## 2009

- 1 Kentucky Crafted: The Market
- 2 St. James Court Art Show
- 3 Paradise City Arts Festival
- 4 Scottsdale Arts Festival
- 5 Francisco's Farm Arts Festival at Midway College
- 6 Kentuck Festival of the Arts
- 7 Bayou City Art Festival
- 8 The American Craft Council Show in Baltimore
- 9 League of NH Craftsmen's Fair
- 10 Des Moines Arts Festival

## 2008

- 1 Wausau's Artrageous Weekend: Art in the Park, Festival of Arts, "Birds in Art"
- 2 Kentucky Crafted: The Market
- 3 Bayou City Art Festival
- 4 Scottsdale Arts Festival
- 5 Des Moines Arts Festival
- 6 St. James Court Art Show
- 7 Francisco's Farm Arts Festival at Midway College
- 8 The American Craft Council Show in Baltimore
- 9 Ann Arbor Street Art Fair, the Original
- 10 Kentuck Festival of the Arts

## 2007

- 1 Paradise City Arts Festival
- 2 Scottsdale Arts Festival
- 3 Long's Park Art & Craft Festival
- 4 Ann Arbor Art Fairs
- 5 The American Craft Council Shows
- 6 Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands
- 7 Fiesta Arts Fair
- 8 La Quinta Arts Festival
- 9 Francisco's Farm Arts Festival at Midway College
- 10 Des Moines Arts Festival

# fairs & festivals

## 2 St. James Court Art Show Louisville, Ky.

If you don't dedicate the entire weekend to walking the St. James Court Art Show in Old Louisville, you may risk "sensory overload," warns director Marguerite Esrock. "There are more than 700 booths to visit," she explains. "So if you're going to do the entire show, I suggest breaking it up into two days." Six main entrances lead in and out of four square, booth-lined blocks framed by Victorian mansions. If you do walk the show in one day, grab a program and mark your route (and where you parked!). The next show takes place Oct. 1-3. To learn more, visit [www.stjamescourtartshow.com](http://www.stjamescourtartshow.com).

## 3 Paradise City Arts Festival Northampton, Mass.

The Paradise City Arts Festival is a multi-faceted event that incorporates work by cutting-edge emerging and established artists with an array of fine foods and live music acts. Founding director Linda Post recommends starting in the exhibition tent, where you'll find a third of the exhibiting artists, before you break for lunch in the dining tent. Continue your afternoon in the arena building and sculpture garden. In these areas you'll find a silent art auction, a themed showcase of exhibitors' works, and an array of installations, fountains and garden furnishings. The show returns May 29-31 and Oct. 9-11. Go to [www.paradisecityarts.com](http://www.paradisecityarts.com) for more information.



Goldsmith Jacob Albee and his wife Kristin welcome visitors at the Paradise City Arts Festival in Northampton.

## 4 Scottsdale Arts Festival Scottsdale, Ariz.

The Scottsdale Arts Festival takes place in a lush 20-acre outdoor setting. "It can take an entire afternoon just to see everything," explains festival director Janice Bartczak. She recommends starting at the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, then walking along the civic center's footpaths. "A leisurely pace is best. Be sure to stop and chat with the artists," Bartczak says—and soak in views of landscaped gardens, fountains and permanent sculpture installations. If you have more time, your ticket also gets you into the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art for the day. Make the trip March 12-14. Visit [www.scottsdaleperformingarts.org](http://www.scottsdaleperformingarts.org) for details.



Scottsdale Arts Festival exhibitors Mary Filapek and Lou Ann Townsend created this brooch.

## 5 Francisco's Farm Arts Festival at Midway College Midway, Ky.

Francisco's Farm Arts Festival at Midway College is about quality, not quantity. "We intentionally limit the number of artists to approximately 150 so you can visit every booth at a leisurely pace," explains event coordinator Marcie Christensen. The show culls artists from almost 20 states each year, and offers a range of mediums in each aisle. The festival also features hourly demonstrations, public art projects, live music and an indoor gallery. Another bonus? Saturday ticket holders can return Sunday for free admission. Visit the outdoor festival June 26-27. Go to [www.franciscosfarm.org](http://www.franciscosfarm.org) for more information.

## 6 Kentuck Festival of the Arts Northport, Ala.

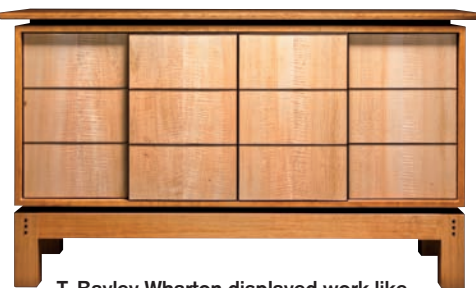
Artists and attendees converge under shady trees to celebrate the two-day Kentuck Festival of the Arts each fall. With more than 280 artists working in 12 mediums, there's a lot to explore. Valerie Piette, program manager of the Kentuck

Museum Association, recommends walking the grounds at a leisurely pace. “It’s a laid-back, welcoming environment,” she says. Emerging artists mingle with established artists, some of whom only show at Kentuck. You can upgrade your experience through the Patron Program to receive special invitations, festival passes and “Kentuck Bucks” to spend on craft. The show returns Oct. 16-17. Visit [www.kentuck.org](http://www.kentuck.org) for details.

before artists make too many sales. You can find perks like invitations to preview parties and Art Heist through the VIP program. The festival runs March 26-28 and Oct. 9-10. For details, visit [www.bayoucityartfestival.com](http://www.bayoucityartfestival.com).

## 9 The American Craft Council Show in Baltimore Baltimore, Md.

“The American Craft Council Show in Baltimore can be daunting for a first-time attendee,” admits Bernadette Boyle, the Council’s director of marketing and communications. To get a sense of the works of all 700 exhibitors, a game plan is a must. Boyle recommends previewing the works online, then making notes on your show guide while you walk the floor. The most important part? “Talk to the artists!” she says. “Ask about their process, what inspires them, where they’re from and where else they show their work.” Take it all in Feb. 24-27, 2011. Learn more at [www.craftcouncil.org](http://www.craftcouncil.org).



T. Bayley Wharton displayed work like this “Sliding Door Shoji Cabinet” at the American Craft Council Show in Baltimore.

wander the grounds, then stopping at the lodge, or food and performance tents, when you need a break. Another can’t-miss element? The “Living with Craft” exhibition—professionally designed room vignettes furnished entirely with handcrafted works. The fair returns Aug. 7-15. Visit [www.nhcrafts.org](http://www.nhcrafts.org) for details.

## 10 Des Moines Arts Festival Des Moines, Iowa

“Start on Friday, the first day of the Des Moines Arts Festival,” recommends executive director Stephen King. Pick up a festival guide and make one loop through the artist booths, taking “copious notes,” then return on a second round to talk to your favorites. If you need a break, the food courts and entertainment stages bookend the festival, so it’s easy to regroup. Upgrade to the VIP membership package to get even more out of the experience. You’ll receive credentials, a signed, limited-edition festival poster and an invitation to the members-only preview reception. Visit the show June 25-27. Find all the details at [www.desmoinesartsfestival.org](http://www.desmoinesartsfestival.org). ●



Melissa Finelli presents her sculptural sterling silver and gold jewelry at the Bayou City Art Festival.

## 7 Bayou City Art Festival Houston, Texas

The Bayou City Art Festival bills itself as a biannual “finely curated outdoor art gallery.” To really soak it all in, Kimberly Stoilis, executive director of the Art Colony Association, recommends you “take the time to ask questions and hear the stories behind the art,” from some of the 300 exhibitors. Stoilis says to come on opening day to see the best of the best

## 8 League of NH Craftsmen’s Fair Newbury, N.H.

It’s almost critical to plan ahead for the League of NH Craftsmen’s Fair in August—there are so many demonstrations, workshops and seminars, you’ll want to schedule in your favorites. More than 200 booths are perched atop a mountain overlooking Lake Sunapee. Terri Wiltse, operations manager and fair director, recommends entering at gate one or three to



The Des Moines Arts Festival attracted more than 250,000 attendees in 2009.

## And the winner is...

Lynda Walker of Winter Park, Fla., won a \$500 travel certificate from AMERICANStyle by voting for her favorite shows: Ann Arbor Street Art Fair, the Original in Ann Arbor, Mich., the Downtown Festival & Art Show in Gainesville, Fla., and the Winter Park Sidewalk Art Festival in her hometown. Although she is partial to shows close to home, she says she chooses based on the variety of craft at each show. “There’s an excellent variety of categories at these wonderful locations,” she says.