

pleasant people. After a long first day, I was appreciative of the party the first night. The music was perfect.”

King said consistency in staff results in higher comfort levels with their vendors. “This show has been around so long I’d say 90% of the staff at the front desk are familiar. The knowledge they carry is invaluable when there are lots of questions at once, and the friendly demeanor of the staff has become predictable,” King said. “I will always make it a high priority to make it fun and appealing for volunteers to return the next year.”

► **November 24-26, 2023; Rio Grande Arts & Crafts Festival – Holiday Show, Albuquerque, NM.** Contact: Rio Grande Arts and Crafts Festivals, Ruth Gore, Colorado Springs, CO 80919; Phone: 505-292-7457; Email: info@riograndefestivals.com; Website: riograndefestivals.com; Application fee: \$30; Space fee: \$595; Space sizes: 10x10 to 20x10; Exhibitors: 185; Attendance estimate: 7,000; Admission: \$10.
Compiled from *FastAudit* reviews

FastAudit Scores

(1=lowest; 10=highest)

Sales.....	7.8
Quality of Work.....	9.1
Balance of Mediums.....	9.2
Prestige of Show.....	8.7
Attendance.....	8.1
Weather.....	7.3
Advertising.....	8.8
Management.....	9.8
Artist Treatment.....	9.6
Artist Amenities.....	8.7
Judging and Awards.....	6.0
Layout.....	9.1
Load-In/-Out.....	9.4
Parking.....	9.2

The Rio Grande Arts & Crafts Festival – Holiday Show ranked FA51 in 2023’s *200 Best* list. All the artists who reviewed 2023’s show said they would exhibit in it again.

One ceramicist reported \$6,000 in sales and said the show had great sales and people.

A photographer who made \$4,500 said, “This is a very well-organized show and very artist friendly. Sales are always good. Attendance and sales were good. Load-in, setup, and load-out were easy and not stressful. The promoters do a good job organizing and advertising the event.”

A sculpture artist who had \$3,800 in sales said, “Great patrons in a great city, with a great promotion team.”

The sales total for one fiber/textile/leather artist was \$3,000. “The artists are treated well, and this group always does a lot of advertising to get the shoppers in,” the artist said.

It was the first time doing the show for a mixed media artist who made about \$750. This artist would like to give it another try, saying the event had good attendance, people were there to shop, and interactions were great.

A fiber/textile/leather artist who had \$15,000 in sales said, “Great show!”

A metal artist said, “Everything went well. I enjoy working with the staff and seeing fellow artists returning and hopefully doing well. It’s a good time of year to sell inventory for Christmas shopping. The decor, music, and all-around festive environment are fun.” The artist did not report the sales total.

A photographer who made \$7,000 said it was a good show and well-run and attended.

Promoter’s Self-Review

Liz King said 2023’s Rio Grande Arts & Crafts Festival – Holiday Show was logistically smooth from setup through teardown, with strong attendance that was almost back to pre-COVID-19 levels.

“From a broad perspective, the event scene has gotten more and more crowded over Thanksgiving weekend. There were several new vendor markets vying for the attention of potential patrons in Albuquerque, and a well-known art show in Santa Fe that shifted from December to the same dates,” said King, director of Rio Grande Festivals. “Luckily, with our large database of attendee contacts, as well as our base of season pass holders, we held steady with our best and most loyal buyers.” She said another thing that impacted customers was the venue’s price increase on parking, raised to match their event ticket price. “Usually, increases like this impact customers for a year or so before they forget about it,” King said.

Attendance was estimated at 7,000. “Overall, in our survey, 68% of artists reported average, above average, or positively record-breaking sales,” she said. “Fifty-two percent received follow-up orders or commissions by the time they were surveyed.”

Artists commented positively on communication (4.8 / 5 stars), management (4.9 / 5 stars), easy setup and teardown, festive atmosphere, and the overall festival family camaraderie, King said. “We also had positive comments on our annual



Jan Severson demonstrates basket weaving during the Rio Grande Arts & Crafts Festival – Holiday Show.

Photo courtesy of Rio Grande Festivals



The 2023 CenterFest attracted crowds.
Photo courtesy of Beth Lowery

Artists’ Thanksgiving tradition, where 30 out-of-towners joined together for a holiday dinner at the same restaurant,” she said.

King said there was some feedback on average purchase prices being lower than expected which she thought was unsurprising for the economic climate and a holiday-themed event. She shared some of the feedback from artists.

“I thought it was very well-organized. I appreciated the contact with the organizers, the cleanliness of the venue, the extra touches like music, and the mix of artists,” said mixed media artist Fehrunissa Willett.

Textile artist Linda Reese said, “We enjoy everything about the event. We have a great following, and it is a fun group of artists. The load-in and -out is easy.”

Lucine Dirtadian, a fine jewelry artist, said, “Festive atmosphere, great clientele, wonderful staff and promoters.”

King commented on things learned at the show that will improve future ones. “The simple added touches for artists really go a long way. If the venue allows it, brewing our own coffee is such a laid-back way to get to meet everyone in the mornings,” she said. “At this show, we also do customer drawings every hour for artwork that the artists donate. There’s a booth right up front with tons of options, and customers enter the drawing right when they walk in. It doesn’t take much organizing, and the customers absolutely love hearing their name called over the intercom. It really gives us a chance to build up our mailing list for next year.”

Her message to those considering this show is, “This is a great sales opportunity, especially for artists offering a healthy amount of items priced at \$200 or less, alongside higher-priced items. Of all the shows I run and all the things I hear from artists, it’s just a very well-oiled machine of a show for all of us. It’s consistent year-to-year in terms of sales, crowds, and positive energy — if you’re looking for a solid fall show to add to your circuit, this a great option.”

North Carolina

- ▶ **September 16-17, 2023; CenterFest Arts Festival, Durham, NC.** Contact: Durham Arts Council, 120 Morris St., Durham, NC 27701; Phone: 919-560-2787; Email: cscott@durhamarts.org; Website: durhamarts.org; Application fee: \$35; Space fees: \$275 to \$550; Space sizes: 10x10 to 10x20; 100% outdoors; Exhibitors: 110; Attendance estimate: 30,000.
Compiled from *FastAudit* reviews

FastAudit Scores

(1=lowest; 10=highest)

Sales	9.0
Quality of Work	9.2
Balance of Mediums.....	9.1
Prestige of Show.....	9.1
Attendance.....	9.3
Weather.....	7.5
Advertising.....	8.9
Management.....	9.5
Artist Treatment	9.5
Artist Amenities	9.3
Judging and Awards	8.3
Layout.....	8.4
Load-In/-Out	7.9
Parking.....	8.2

The CenterFest Arts Festival ranked FA59 in 2023’s *200 Best* list. All the artists who reviewed 2023’s event said they would exhibit there again.

A digital art artist who reported sales of about \$2,100 was among them.

A jewelry artist who made \$1,500 said it was the best event in the area.

One ceramicist had \$2,000 in sales and said, “This is always