Local art to fill picturesque venue

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Lyons’ Art at River Bend diversifies selection, offers budget-friendly pieces

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By Kalene McCort • Staff Writer

The serene venue of River Bend, in Lyons, is truly eye-catching with its grand cliffs, lush grass, blooming trees and rushing water. The locale, often the place where folks tie the knot, will be filled with the original work of more than 50 local creatives this Sunday, thanks to the efforts of Boulder County Arts Alliance and Lyons Arts and Humanities Commission. Art at River Bend, an annual free event held along the North St. Vrain Creek, continues to draw locals and visitors eager to find a one-of-a-kind pieces to add to their collections.

“Art at River Bend has been growing steadily the last five years and, with the support of the Town of Lyons and the Lyons Arts and Humanities Commission, it has become a joyous community event,” said Crystal Polis, communications director for the Boulder Country Arts Alliance. “I love how the space, which is gorgeous anyway, comes together with all the art tents and beautiful items for sale.”

This year, attendees can feast their eyes on live demos by potters from Clay Art Co-op, painter Gail Pederson and shadow box creator Melody Huisjen. There will even be an ancient Japanese tea ceremony performed by artist and musician Mike Ricci.

“River Bend is a private venue,” said Polis. “The owners are extremely

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Art is displayed against a beautiful natural backdrop at a previous Art at River Bend in Lyons.

Lauren Click / Courtesy photo
At top left on Page 8: 'Desert Hare' by Longmont-based artist Arpita Choudhury. Choudhury will have a booth at this Sunday's Art at River Bend in Lyons.

Above: “Wild at Heart,” by artist Arpita Choudhury.

Children get creative at 2017's Art at River Bend. Sunday's event will also feature kids' activities.

Courtesy Photo
An attendee of 2017's Art at River Bend gazes at the work of photographer Kirk Fry. Sunday the annual Lyons art event will feature more than 50 artists, kids' activities, food, drinks and more.

Rocio DePrado / Courtesy photo
'OtterSpace,' by Arpita Choudhury.

Courtesy photo

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gracious to donate it to us for the day because it is otherwise booked with weddings. So, patrons should know that Art at River Bend is their chance to explore and enjoy this amazing location.”

Polis said patrons can have lunch from Boulder catering company Cured and drinks from Lyons’ Spirit Hound Distillery.

Youngsters looking to explore their own creativity can do so right onsite.

“There will be art activities from Crafty Chassis and plenty of space for the kids to run around, climb on rocks and put their feet in the water,” said Polis.

The amount of different mediums on display will be vast. Fiber art, photography, pottery, jewelry and paintings are among the pieces that will be up for sale.

“This year we have the widest range of art we’ve ever had,” said Polis “We expanded our call for entry to include artisans as well as artists. There will be incredible original works for sale as well as prints, greeting cards and smaller affordable items.”

Visitors to River Bend can find the whimsical and boldly colored work of Longmont-based artist Arpita Choudhury, who operates under the moniker Fern Spike Art. “As a kid, I was interested in both art and science, but in the end I chose to pursue science, specifically marine biology with a focus on molecular biology,” said Choudhury. “I still did art on the side when I had the time. When my husband and I moved to Colorado, five years ago, I would paint when I wasn’t applying for jobs. One day, a friend purchased one of my paintings and it suddenly occurred to me that I could try pursuing art as a career. I sold art online and created a blog using art as a platform for science communication.”

From intriguing floral cameos to a cartoon otter astronaut clutching the earth in his paws, Choudhury’s work varies in style, yet always seems to delight onlookers.

“As a biologist, I am inspired by nature,” said Choudhury. “But rather than create art that is an exact replication of nature, I prefer to create nature-inspired art with a twist. Sometimes it is a play on words. Sometimes I infuse humor into my work. It varies from subject to subject.”

From designs being splashed on decorative pillows to the covers of greeting cards, her artistic offerings adorn a number of items — making it easy for buyers of all budgets to indulge their purchasing desires.

“I like the freedom art gives me after following the rigor of science for so long,” said Choudhury. “It took me awhile to allow myself to loos-
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en my style and not worry if the composition was scientifically accurate. I still struggle with letting my imagination take the lead.”

For Choudhury, the creative process is sparked from something she has seen or read. After loosely sketching out concepts, she uses a variety of different mediums such as watercolor, gouache, colored pencils and micron pens to craft a piece brimming with both texture and depth.

“My studio is in my home, so I don’t have that many opportunities to interact with others when it comes to art,” said Choudhury. “I am most looking forward to talking about my art or art in general with the folks that come by my booth.”

In addition to an array of art, visitors will have access to free tours of diverse and beautifully-crafted tiny homes that reside within WeeCasa — a tiny house resort village adjacent to River Bend.

“I am fascinated by which one of my pieces draws them in and why,” said Choudhury.

“I am always surprised by the few folks who tell me that they already own some of my artwork or have seen my artwork elsewhere. As a new artist, it thrills me to know that I am making a connection through my art.”

Mariana Madrigal takes a selfie while sitting next to the St. Vrain Creek in Lyons in 2015. Art at River Bend will offer patrons a chance to dip their toes into the nearby creek.

Jeremy Papasso / Staff Photographer

Patrons of Art at River Bend can visit the nearby WeeCasa in Lyons for a tour of its tiny houses.

Cliff Grassmick / Staff Photographer