

SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS OF ART SHOW LOCATION AND FREQUENCY

Donald Brandes

The topic of art usually brings to mind well known artists and great museums and galleries. There is, however, another side to the world of art involving day-to-day activities of the thousands of journeyman artists who have not and probably never will "make it big." The vast majority of working artists remain as small retail business people, selling their works whenever and wherever they can, hoping to make a big sale but never counting on it.

For the past two years I have been a part-time artist and a full-time geographer. The importance of location as a major factor in marketing artwork became particularly intriguing to me, and therefore I decided to study some of the location factors of art sales with the intention of enhancing future sales and profits.

The most popular art marketing outlets are large group shows. These are organized by promoters in a variety of locations. The artist usually pays for an allotted space in which to display items for sale. Assorted artists and craftsmen, including painters, printmakers, sculptors, and jewelry makers, gather to display their creations along the curb of a closed street, in a city park or shopping mall, or at whatever site being used for that particular show. The number of artists participating in a given show varies widely. Most art shows attract some 50-150 artists, but some may be as large as 1,000 participants.

In deciding which shows to attend, I observed that the quantity and location of shows in Florida seemed to vary seasonally. I hypothesized that art show activity is closely related to season of the year: warm southerly locations are sought during the winter; cooler locations in the northern parts of the state become desirable as spring comes and the south becomes too warm. When the entire state becomes hot during the summer, art show activities move northward. Supporting the hypothesis is the fact that Florida is prominent as a winter tourist area, and thus it was further assumed that the frequency of art shows in Florida would increase in autumn to a maximum during the winter, and gradually decrease in the spring to reach very low levels in the summer.

In order to test these assumptions, I constructed a series of maps on which locations of all known art shows in Florida were plotted in two-month intervals for the twelve-month period of most recent data (Figs. 1-6).¹ These maps appear to support the hypothesis. The general trend for art show activity to be concentrated progressively further south during the autumn and winter is revealed in Figures 1-3. Figure 4 illustrates the increase in the number of shows in the central portion of the state during the spring while activity in the southern portion has declined slightly. Figures 5 and 6 reveal the small number of Florida art shows during the summer and their almost complete absence from the populous southeastern coast where activity had been most heavily concentrated during the late fall and winter.

The relative lack of shows in the summer reduces the opportunities to sell art products in Florida during that season. Artists residing in Florida with one or more years of show circuit experience usually abandon the art show circuit during the summer and use that time to prepare merchandise for fall and winter sale. It is generally agreed that those few summer shows which are in Florida are not profitable to attend. Out-of-state artists who visit Florida during the cooler months return north during the summer. These northern artists claim that highly profitable shows occur in northern states during the summer and I questioned if a journey north in summer would profit my business.



Next I hypothesized that art shows in summer occurred in progressively more northerly locations in a wave-like pattern through the southeastern states into the Northeast and Midwest, reaching the most northerly states during the hottest months. If so, a Florida-based artist could follow the wave north, beginning in nearby southern states in the early summer, and progressing north to the northern-most states of New England and the Midwest by July and August.

A second series of maps was made to test this hypothesis (Figs. 7-12). These maps locate all of the known art shows occurring in the eastern United States for the twelve-month period previously examined. The expected wave-like movement of art show activity between Florida and northern states does appear but is weak. Art shows in Maine, Vermont, upstate New York, Michigan, and Minnesota reach their highest frequency during the warmest months, but the greatest concentration of art show activity for the eastern United States as a whole never progresses that far north.

The wave-like progression of shows south to north with season is obscured because many art shows are held in enclosed sites, such as shopping malls or civic centers, where the effects of inclement weather are reduced. Thus, snow and subfreezing temperatures do not totally prevent art shows, although these factors do dissuade them. Moreover, large urban centers (particularly the Chicago, New Jersey-New York City-Connecticut, and Washington, D.C. areas) concentrate art show activity over many months, from spring until late autumn. If the heavy concentration of activities in these populous urban centers were removed from the maps, the north-south seasonal progression of art show frequency would be more apparent.

Other states individually do not display the marked tendency which Florida has for a north-south fluctuation of art show activities within its boundaries, but taken collectively, the remainder of the eastern United States generally experiences the same behavior as Florida by itself. As spring and summer come, art show activity penetrates progressively further into more northerly states. As autumn approaches, northern shows become fewer. When northern weather restricts outdoor activities, shows occur with increasing frequency in more southerly states, particularly Florida. For almost half the year Florida hosts more art shows than any other state.

It would seem that the number of art shows by month in Florida should be related inversely to the number of shows occurring in the remainder of the eastern United States. This assumption was tested. The results support the assumption, but only moderately (Figs. 13 and 14, Table 1). A correlation procedure applied to these data yielded a value of $-.43$. The negative correlation verifies the inverse relationship between the two data sets, but the value of correlation indicates that only $.18$ of the variance of either data set can be explained by variations in the other set.

TABLE 1
SEASONAL VARIATION IN ART SHOW ACTIVITY

	Florida		East U.S.	
	Number of Shows	Percentage	Number of Shows	Percentage
Sept.	9	4.16	218	12.94
Oct.	25	11.57	195	11.57
Nov.	39	18.06	170	10.09
Dec.	11	5.09	72	4.27
Jan.	21	9.72	26	1.54
Feb.	35	16.20	49	2.90
Mar.	33	15.28	76	4.51
Apr.	26	12.04	160	9.49
May	8	3.70	180	10.68
June	4	1.85	179	10.62
July	5	2.32	176	10.44
Aug.	0	0.00	184	10.92
Total	216	100.00	1685	100.00



FIGURE 7

**EASTERN UNITED STATES
ART SHOWS
SEPTEMBER 1977**



FIGURE 8

**EASTERN UNITED STATES
ART SHOWS
NOVEMBER 1977**



FIGURE 9

**EASTERN UNITED STATES
ART SHOWS
JANUARY 1978**



FIGURE 10

**EASTERN UNITED STATES
ART SHOWS
MARCH 1978**

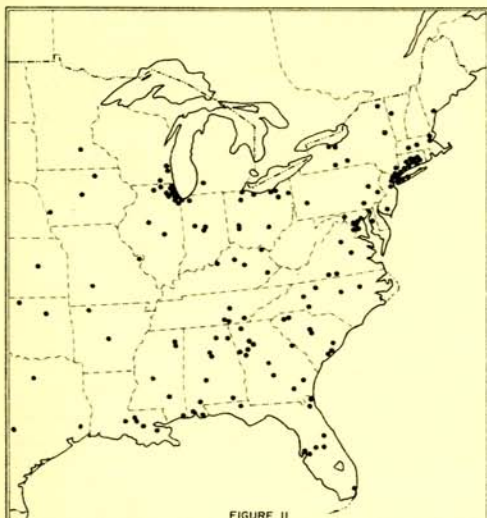


FIGURE 11

**EASTERN UNITED STATES
ART SHOWS
MAY 1978**

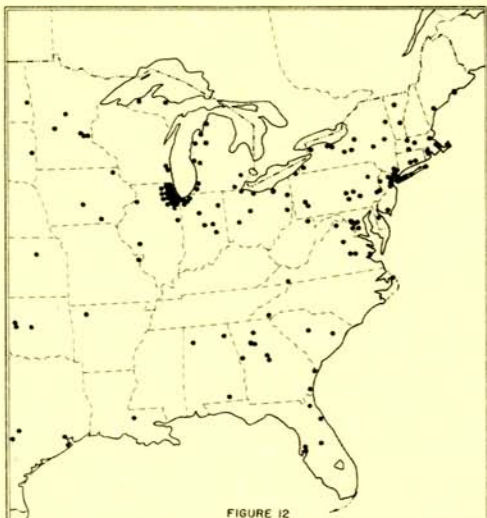


FIGURE 12

**EASTERN UNITED STATES
ART SHOWS
JULY 1978**

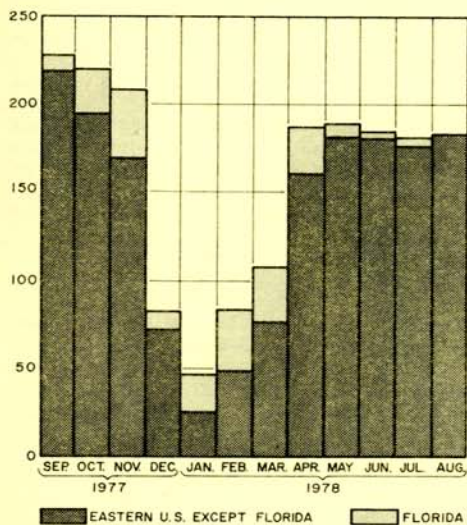


Fig. 13. Number of Art Shows by Month

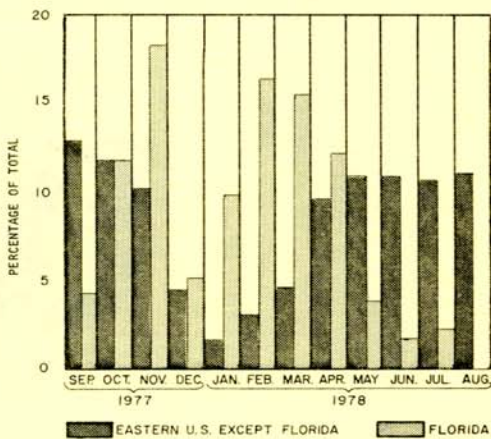


Fig. 14. Percentage of Art Shows by Month

Although Florida experiences its highest frequency of art shows during the cooler months and the group of other states experiences its period of least activity at this time, the pattern of change in frequency is not a continuous curve upward or downward for either area. During some months, frequency of art show activity is high or low respectively for both areas. Florida experiences a brief sharp peak during October and November, while the more northerly states are still hosting a large number of shows. In December, frequency of shows in both areas drops off sharply, and in April art show activity in the north has already reached its high warm season range while Florida is still experiencing its high rate of cool season activity.

The results of this investigation have been used along with other independently derived information on sales and profit potentials as a means of determining when and where it would be most advantageous to sell art. Some art shows are not profitable to enter, so it becomes necessary for the artist to locate in an area where several shows are available. The chances of entering a good one are thus increased. It becomes desirable to locate in the locale of greatest show frequency. During warm months, when Florida-based artists may desire to find shows elsewhere, nearby states (Georgia, Alabama, the Carolinas, for example) do not have the high show frequency which those artists require. The principal concentration of art show activity during this time jumps directly to distantly removed northern states, imposing great and often prohibitive expense on the Florida artist. Many Florida artists, myself included, have determined that it is not adequately profitable to pursue the art show circuit north during the summer.

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1. The sources of information regarding art show dates and locations were periodical publications in which show organizers advertise to attract artists. The foremost of these publications is *Sunshine Artist*, a monthly magazine based in Orlando, Florida but with nation-wide circulation. Other sources included *American Artist*, *Art News*, and *Art Scene*.



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