

Community Assistantship Program

Meander 2005: Upper MN Valley Art Crawl

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Prepared in partnership with
Upper Minnesota Valley Regional
Development Commission

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April, 2006

CAP Report 097

May 2006

CAP is a cross-college, cross-campus University of Minnesota initiative coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

Funds for this project were generously provided by the McKnight foundation.

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Date: December 8, 2005

Client: Dawn Hegland, Division Director, [Transportation, Recreation, Tourism Division, Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission \(UMVRDC\)](#)

Project: Artists' Survey: Report on Sales, Attendance, and Suggestions for Operational Improvements for 2006 Meander

Sponsor: Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC)

Consultant: Verna Monson, M.A., Graduate Research Assistant, Community Assistance Program (CAP), University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Campus

Attached please find the Executive Summary and Report from the Artists' Survey for 2005 Meander. Overall, it appears that the Meander Art Crawl made significant progress this year at increasing attendance, attracting more visitors from the Twin Cities and border states, and in increasing sales by 53%, from \$12,046 in 2004 to \$18,475. The artists reported that Meander also benefits their sales in subsequent weeks and months following the event. The value of Meander in promoting artists to potential customers is likely significant, but challenging to quantify.

The Executive Summary provides the highlights of the survey results. Detailed tables summarizing the findings and verbatim open-ended comments and suggestions are also provided.

A few improvements in this year's methodology were suggested by the survey. They include:

- contact non-respondents ($n=11$) and attempt to administer the survey by phone in order to assess the extent to which non-respondents may differ from respondents. For example, those who did not respond may have had more or less sales than the average respondent.
- encourage or require 100% response rate and disclosure of total sales (to ensure that total benefits of Meander are not underestimated);
- add a question regarding how much in commissions (post-Meander sales) resulted from the previous year's Meander; and
- add a section summarizing geographic locations of customers, that is, which states or other countries visitors came from OR add a note to the tracking sheet that suggests photocopying sign-in sheets giving customer data. The purpose of this is to glean how many states / countries visitors represented.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the content of this report.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to help make Meander a success, and shape its improvements going forward. I wish you and all Meander committee members continued success as you realize your vision of building an economically and socially vibrant community that values art and artists.

2005 MEANDER ART CRAWL ARTISTS' SURVEY RESULTS

Executive Summary

This summary reports on sales, attendance, and operational issues as reported by the participating artists in the 2005 Meander Art Crawl. The purpose of this survey was to estimate the economic impact of Meander on participating artists; gauge attendance at Meander by day and site; and gather suggestions and comments for use in making improvements in the 2006 Meander. The survey was anonymous; a total of 39 surveys were returned (out of a possible 50) representing 27 official Meander sites, for a response rate of 78%. Out of the 39 artists who reported, 8 chose to remain anonymous. Each item and response summaries, along with a summary of all open-ended comments, are shown on pp 4-8 of this report.

REPORTED SALES

The results indicate that the total reported sales increased from \$12,046 in 2004 to \$18,475, a **53% increase**. Three factors suggest that this is an underestimated total, however.

- Two well-known artists in the region declined to respond to the question about total sales, but they both indicated a high level of revenue. One reported sales were up 50% from 2004; the other reported a 60% increase in sales.
- Four other artists indicated that although they do not sell products during Meander, that contact with Meander customers results in more commissions that come in after the event.
- The response rate was 78% of Meander artists ($n=39$ out of 50). Because the survey could be filled out anonymously, it is possible that artists who chose not to report differed from those who did in a systematic way, i.e., that their sales were very low or very high. This suggests that non-response may contribute to underestimating the total revenue generated by Meander.

Without determining whether the non-respondents differed from respondents with respect to amount of sales, statistical methods of estimating total sales for all participants cannot be used.

For future Meander artists' surveys, encouraging 100% of the artists to report actual sales will be useful to ensure that the program's economic impact can be accurately measured.

ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE

Several themes emerged in the open-ended comments that were related to attendance. First, artists commented in the survey and in interviews on-site that attendance was up from 2004 Meander, by 50-60%. Second, several artists commented that there were more visitors from out-of-state locations, and border states. One artist attributed this increase in numbers and diversity of visitors to improved advertising, and the use of national ads in travel or crafts magazines. Third, the artists reported that Saturday had the highest overall level of attendance; followed by Sunday, and Friday.

The average number of visitors per site was 294 ($SD=139$). Because of the geographic dispersion of the Meander sites, and redundancy between artist counts per site, estimating total attendance from this data was not possible.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Several of the artists ($n=4$) commented that promotion and advertising had significantly improved from 2004. One artist stated:

Whoever did the advertising . . . has done a terrific job. All I can say is thank you so very much – we artists out here need this help. I'm so grateful . . .

Some of the key areas of improvements that emerged as themes in the comments included:

- 1. Hours / days Meander open for business.** Regarding flow of traffic, the artists reported that Sunday morning was very slow, as was Friday. They suggested the following:
 - Change hours on Sunday to 11 or 12 to 6 p.m. ($n=14$); and
 - Extend hours on Friday to at least 6 p.m. to accommodate people who work until 5 p.m. ($n=3$);
- 2. Signage and brochures.** Meander customers commented on difficulty finding some of the artist sites ($n=5$), according to the artists. One artist reported that two customers got lost. To improve this aspect of Meander they suggested:
 - Improve the ease of finding locations by using more distinct signs on roads or streets (bright colors or arrows), ($n=7$); and
 - An easier-to-use map in the brochure (some noted people did not read the brochure); include more landmarks on brochure map (e.g., county roads); and coordinate numbers in brochure of artist sites with signage).
- 3. Advertising.**
 - More local advertising; and more advertising to the surrounding tier of communities.
- 4. General suggestions.**
 - Artists need to have sufficient product available for sale to make it worth the while of customers.

CONCLUSIONS

In sum, it appears that from the artists' perspective, that 2005 Meander was a significant improvement from 2004. They perceive that Meander is now reaching a broader audience, largely due to expanded advertising efforts, and that momentum is building. Sales have also been positively impacted with an impressive increase in sales of 53%. However, three factors suggest that this reported total is an underestimate. These include: 1) the voluntary, anonymous nature of the survey, resulting in some artists not reporting sales ($n=2$), 2) some artists choosing not to respond (22% or $n=11$); and 3), artists' income consists not only of direct sales during Meander, but of commissions for future work. These post-event sales activities are not accounted for in the present survey. Thus, it is recommended that all artists report on these revenues post-Meander in 2006 so that a more accurate estimate of total sales can be made and a question be added to the artists' survey asking to estimate (on a scale of 1 – 4) the degree to which their sales were impacted post-Meander by commissions or sales that resulted from contacts during the event.

2005 MEANDER ART CRAWL ARTISTS' SURVEY RESULTS

Tables and Open-Ended Comments

SALES REPORTED BY DAYS

Item 1: Please provide an estimate of revenue for the Meander event, providing subtotals by day (check the response that best fits your estimates).

Table 1. Estimated Sales of Individual Artists by Day

Artist Est. Sales by Day	0-\$100	\$101-200	\$201-300	\$301-400	\$401+	Total Artists Reporting
Friday	20	8	3	2	3	36
Saturday	12	5	4	6	8	35
Sunday	17	11	2	1	5	36

Response to item: $N= 36$ (response withheld=2)

Most profitable day: Sunday

Least profitable day: Friday

TOTAL SALES REPORTED

Item 2. Using either estimates or your records, please provide the TOTAL amount of revenue (fill in the blank, rounding to the nearest dollar):

Response to item: $N= 36$ (response withheld or unknown=3, including 2 who reported earnings of \$401 +)

Sum of **reported income** across the three days: **\$18,475**

($M=601$; $SD=426$; $Median=550$; $Range= 0-2000$)

TOTAL ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE

Item 3. Approximately how many people attended your studio on the following days?

Table 2. Estimated Attendance by Day

Attendance / day	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61+	Total Artists Reporting
Friday	7	9	4	5	13	33
Saturday	0	1	0	2	35	38
Sunday	1	8	6	4	19	38

Response to item: $n = 38$ (unknown=1)

Day with highest attendance reported: Saturday

Day with lowest: Friday

Most frequent level of attendance reported: 61+ (Saturday) ($n=35$)

Second most frequent level of attendance reported: 61+ (Sunday) ($n=19$)

*Item 4. What is your estimate of **TOTAL** attendance across the three days:*

Response to item: $n = 37$ (too many to estimate or unknown=2)

Average number of attendees to individual artist sites: 294

($SD=139$; $Median=300$; $Range= 19-600$)

Item #5. How likely are you to participate in next year's Meander Art Crawl?

Response to item: $N = 34$ (response withheld=5)

9% ($n=3$) Very Unlikely	0 Somewhat Unlikely	29% ($n=10$) Somewhat Likely	62% ($n=21$) Very Likely
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Item #6. What suggestions do you have for promoting the event next year? (be specific)

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

COMMENTS ABOUT SALES

- Income was double from what it was in 2004 Meander
- Sales up 60% from 2004 Meander.
- No change from last year
- Although I made no sales (I had nothing for sale on hand), commissioned work has kept me busy. I had a very enjoyable weekend, the interest in the arts people displayed. Having all the positive comments and just having people come to the studio talking and observing.
- A lot of business cards went out and people seemed interested, but I think many of them hated to buy early in the weekend because they had so many artists left to see. I think this will help for next year's sales.
- I had more people, more sales, and most important, several repeat people at my studio.

COMMENTS ABOUT ATTENDANCE

- It was nice to sell to out-of-town people rather than the locals, as usual.
- On Saturday, I had many out-of-area people – probably 20% after I took out the bus from Morris people.
- We were surprised at the good attendance out here in the boondocks. South Dakota was well represented.
- Wasn't an improvement – just a comment that it was a good day. Nice crowd of people.

- Perhaps having a few other artists involved at our location or having ours somewhere in Montevideo. Although, we had a pretty good attendance for our location.
- Seems to be building every year. Keep going !!!
- Traffic was good each day, especially since we were in the country.

COMMENTS ABOUT HOURS / DAYS

- Drop Fridays. Change hours on Sunday from 11-6. (Nobody was here both years until after church on Sunday.)
- Friday was slow, for most people it's a work day.
- Friday and Sunday were very slow days for me.
- Go Friday later instead of 1-6, maybe 5-8 or not at all. Many people thought it was only Saturday / Sunday.
- Saturday was steadily very busy, Madison had "Octoberfest" celebration, this same weekend, that may have helped in bringing people out. Also "Around the Town" rummage sales.
- No need to start before 12 noon on Sunday – could go later into Sunday afternoon – 6 p.m.?
- We had no one Sunday a.m. until about noon. People are all in church around the area.
- Open at 11 instead of 9 on Sunday.
- On Sunday, start after noon.
- Start later (noon) on Sunday – could go later in afternoon instead.
- Sunday morning was very slow – maybe open at 11 instead of 9.
- Starting at noon on Sunday would be better.
- Sunday brought just lookers.
- No one here before noon on Sunday.
- Sunday was a great day – lots of people and better sales.
- Sunday morning was slow; a few stopped after leaving church, p.m. picked up.
- eliminate either Friday or Sunday
- No Friday hours, shorter on Sunday, maybe noon – 5 p.m.
- Fridays are too slow, as are Sunday mornings

COMMENTS ABOUT SIGNAGE / BROCHURES / WEBSITE

- Customers would like some county roads on map to locations – some were hard to find, they said.
- Smaller detailed maps of rural locations.
- Have bigger signs – more than a couple people missed the signs along the road. Couple more people had gotten lost.
- It was suggested that the # on Meander signs correspond with the # on the brochures! I thought this was a good idea.
- Several people mentioned needing more signs out and better directions in the map.
- Need more signage off mainroads.
- List more types of artists, what they do.
- One person stated that she didn't understand that the artists work was for sale
- Would like more pamphlets at businesses
- Brochures went out too early: Improve site mapping. Better local newspaper and radio coverage (instead as a 2" x 4" space in the newspaper).

- It's difficult at this time to comment on improvement, when all I heard was very positive input from people, other than giving them directions to other local sites.
- Brochure that people will read easily. So many people had it in their hand, but had not read it.
- The website was under construction on Friday when they tried to get on to get information (disappointed).

COMMENTS ABOUT ADVERTISING

- Terrific advertising. People from Lead, SD, Sioux Falls, SD -- WCCO, Country Living Magazine, also from Explore MN; people from Minneapolis/St. Paul, Iowa, Wisconsin.
- Whoever did the advertising and everything has done a terrific job. All I can say is thank you so very much – we artists out here need this help – I'm so grateful – of course, the weather was perfect.
- Promotion is great – we attempted to augment it with local radio ads, and public service announcement.
- Use “sale” in the advertising so guests don't think it is just an art show.
- Maybe it could be mentioned some where that the artists' items will be for sale.
- Promote to tier of communities just outside of Prairie Waters area.
- More local advertising mainly print – Star Advisor & American News
- I liked the radio spots. You did a much better job of promoting than last year.
- I still think features in local newspapers need to be done unless I missed the write-up in the Appleton Press or the Willmar Tribune.
- BSAC spent 90.00 on radio ads and it really brought lots of local people – great interest.
- News releases with specific artists - profiled - folks identify with the individual artists
- Advertise on WCCO radio, TV interviews (Mpls channels) beforehand.
- More local coordination with businesses to promote and know about the Meander (businesses in town need to be aware to direct people to the various studios – how to do this?)

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Customers said “What a great idea,” and “I didn't know there were so many talented people out here.”
- The participating artists should be in attendance, and have enough product to make the Meanderers trip worthwhile.
- I need to have items made up for sale next year. I'm beginning a list for next year, additional improvements, and ads, etc.
- I don't feel the fees should go any higher next year.
- Thanks for all the time and effort people put into this event. It's great to see all this local talent highlighted.
- A lot of positive comments from all those attending.
- Weather was very favorable, and maybe “a last shot” at outdoor activities for the most part.
- Best cultural arts event I've seen in 5 years.
- This was great!!
- It was just wonderful. Thank you!!!!!!

- The total atmosphere of the Red Barn was warm, relaxed, and friendly. Many, many positive comments – cider, coffee, and bars were well received.
- Some young boy observed that I must have lots of spare time.
- The tour of school kids was fun and they were interested in “The Barn” and many of the art booths.
- Was unable to attend the gathering at Prairie’s Edge -- only negative comments were too long an introduction, too long with Holm – preferred to be mixing and visiting during entertainment – “food was fantastic,” entertainment from Ostensoe & Hohn delightful.
- A great effort for economic development and tourism. Meander was well planned!!
- Divide up work to all participating. Divide up fund raising for all participating.
- Comments heard: “Nice to have drawings for prizes. Need to all be in one town – too expensive to drive. More jewelry. Nice to have treats & friendly conversations.”
- Excellent. [no suggestions]
- Someone from St. Paul said this place was the highlight of the Meander.
- Heard from customer: “This is one of the best I’ve seen.”
- The busload of 7th and 8th graders loved coming to the Red Barn. We have diversity of talents and media. This made it possible for everyone to be interested in something.
- People enjoyed visiting and enjoyed the atmosphere of the Red Barn.
- Have local communities send out buses to artist through Community Education. Start paper articles one week earlier.
- Kids liked seeing how things were done – “How did you do that painting?”
- Comments heard: “Wish it was open longer Friday p.m. so they could come after work.” “Loved the Barn,” “great variety.” “Went out of our way to go to the Cowgirl Saloon – nothing there, why was it on radio?” “Barn has great variety.”
- Great experience.
- It was another very positive experience!
- Wonderful fun and atmosphere!
- People enjoyed the barn – the atmosphere and the exhibits.
- Order up the same weather
- Almost all the quality checks were excellent
- Many comments on the good quality of the artists’ items.