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Spa ranks in top five 'art towns'

BY JOHN LOVETT
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Hot Springs is now ranked No. 4 on the list of "Top 100 Small Art Towns in America," the book's author said Tuesday.

John Villani's first edition of the book contained no rankings. The second edition of the book by the Santa Fe, N.M.-based writer ranked Hot Springs 52nd. The second printing of the third edition came out in March 2001 and ranked Hot Springs No. 9.

Hot Springs Music Festival artistic director Richard

Rosenberg announced Monday night that Villani's next edition ranks Hot Springs No. 4. HSMF held a dinner and wine tasting fund-raiser with wine writer Natalie Berkowitz of New York Monday night at Chef Paul's.

Villani confirmed the Spa's move upward in the fourth edition, which has just been released.

Ranked above Hot Springs, in order, were Sarasota, Fla., Loveland, Colo., and Santa Fe, N.M. Number five is Asheville, N.C.

A first-run printing of the latest Villani book produced

around 5,000 copies, Vermont publicist David Corey said Tuesday. Past editions have sold nearly 20,000 copies.

From his office Tuesday at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, where he is director of communications, Villani said the Hot Springs Music Festival's "continued success was an encouraging sign of the health of Hot Springs' arts community."

Villani said he also factored in the "expansion of downtown art galleries" and a "come around" for the 59-year-old Hot Springs Arts

Center. Nan Wayne, executive director, said the center will host Villani in a book signing Oct. 1 and 2 at Spender's Corner downtown during the next Art on the Corner.

Adding to Hot Springs' healthy "art town" diagnosis is the Hot Springs Documentary Film Institute, planning its sixth annual What's Up Docs? children's film festival April 3-15. The annual documentary film festival is in late October and early November. One of the directors of this year's Academy Award-winner in the documentary genre, Zana Briski, attended the last fes-

tival for a screening of "Born Into Brothels."

Of course, keeping art alive in Hot Springs are the monthly Hot Springs Gallery Walks, the exhibits at the Hot Springs Civic & Convention Center, the Hot Springs Jazz Festival and Hot Springs Blues Festival during the summer, quarterly productions by The Pocket Theatre, weekly and monthly events at The Poet's Loft, Art in the Park at Hollywood Park, Hot SpringFest, ArtBlast, and the many artistic events at Garvan Woodland Gardens and the Garland County Library.

