



VISUAL ARTS

by Mark Clintberg

Art of the city

Annual festival's onslaught of activity is guaranteed to leave you sleep-deprived

Preview

ARTCITY

Runs September 10 to 19

Various venues

Artcity is back on the rampage.

Poised to infiltrate Calgary's streets, public spaces, lost alleyways and forgotten monuments from September 10 to 19, this annual festival continues its ample roster of lectures, exhibitions, competitions and, of course, parties – all focused on celebrating visual art, architecture and design.

This is a festival you can stumble into and explore for more than a week. Many venues are located right downtown, and easily accessed over lunch break. Die-hard fans will see as much as they possibly can without being hospitalized for nervous exhaustion. Sleep is optional this September.

Last year's provocative theme for the festival: Spread. This year's: Currency. Artcity's strategy is to flood the city with visual material, sometimes in non-traditional settings.

Art Central (100 Seventh Ave. S.W.) – angling to be Calgary's next big venue for all things art – houses some of Artcity's events this year, including its feature exhibition. Participants in this show run like an A-list: Robin Arseneault, Donna Brunsdale, Miloslav Dlouhy, Kris Lindskoog, Deborah Loxam-Kohl, Greg Payce, Lissa Robinson, Bill Rodgers, and Mary Shannon Will. Additionally, Art Central hosts the festival's notorious opening-night glam gala. The opening brings out the full array of Calgary's artists, art-watchers, debutantes, dilettantes, party kids and general public, and generates a portion of the revenue that keeps this non-profit festival operating. Tickets are cheap – \$7 for students, \$10 general admission – and worth it. Food from Murrieta's is included, alcohol is available for sale (but not essential – or is it?) and a DJ will be playing. If you want to rub elbows or other appendages with artists or art sympathizers, this is your best bet for the season. It takes place Friday, September 10 from 8 p.m. until late.

Peepshow, the architectural component of the festival, is an international pavilion-design competition that invites applicants to propose housings or exhibition structures to show artworks. Hold on, there's more: the structure also must be portable, collapsible and secure enough to prevent ne'er-do-wells from waltzing off with the art. Quite a challenge. The resulting proposals are inventive, sometimes strange and, in short, generally hot. The winning structure is fabricated, installed and furnished with an exhibition – this year's winner, SIGNALS by Canadian architect Peter Yeadon, can be viewed in the entry of Bankers Hall throughout the festival. EMmedia screens a compilation of works inside the structure that "explore ideas of exchange and circulation." Applications for this year's Peepshow competition can be seen in City Hall's main atrium, and last year's ambiguous and charming winner, Peep Box, will be installed on Stephen Avenue – look for something the size of a small car, geometric and flaming orange. Then look inside it to see Rat Moves, the first compilation DVD put together by city gem Quickdraw Animation Society.

The Arttalk series of lectures is not just for malnourished fine-arts grads, it's a forum for the exchange of ideas on cultural production. This year's symposium is moderated by local architect hero Marc Boutin – remember that he won the Prix de Rome, and so did the other panelists. No small peanuts here. Alongside Boutin, George Yu, Peter Yeadon and Andrew King will exchange thoughts on their own practices and their takes on "currency." Calgary is lucky to have these folks around, so be sure to attend September 18 starting at noon in the Metropolitan Conference Centre (333 Fourth Avenue S.W.).

Bill Douglas, of Coupe magazine fame, presents a lecture at the Alberta College of Art on Thursday, September 9 at 8 p.m. Butt heads on layout, arm wrestle over typesetting, whatever, just don't miss this. Douglas also acts as the celebrity judge for the new offspring of the festival – a graphic design ideas competition that offers a \$1,000 purse – again on view at Art Central.

Ken Lum presents an artist's talk in conjunction with an exhibition of his works of photography on

September 17 at 9:30 a.m. It's early, certainly, but the exertion will do you good. Lum's work is internationally recognized and collected, and the accompanying show at the Nickle Arts Museum, on tour from the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, is a crisply curated 20-year retrospective that has garnered significant critical acclaim. You can take it all in before your boyfriend's morning yoga routine starts, then go home and show off your mental agility and flexibility.

A definite "yes" goes to Artcity's educational program. School teachers are invited to contact festival partners listed in the Artcity guide to arrange group tours for students – a great chance to develop visual literacy.

Look for full listings of events on stands in coffee shops, movie theatres, etc., or go to www.art-city.ca. Included in the guide is a listing of top-notch openings at other Calgary venues. Flipping through, enthusiasts will see their calendars filling up with hot dates for exhibitions. Most events are free, and even snooty elitists are welcome.

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