

LIC ARTS OPEN



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puts the artists of Queens on THE MAP

BY ALEXA ALTMAN

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Photographer Orestes Gonzalez

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Photos courtesy: www.queensopenarts.com
Long Island City artists display their latest works at the “LIC Arts Open,” an annual festival where local creatives let the public into their studios.

The creative colony of Long Island City blazed with inspirational energy during the second annual LIC Arts Open—a 10-day extravaganza in which local artists welcome the public into their studios. Festival goers experienced the cutting edge in painting, sculpture, photography, theatre and ceramics, crafted by many of the city’s most forefront and promising artistic talents. Hundreds participated in more than 200 exhibitions and performances—demonstrating the masterful skill and breadth of mediums Long Island City artists bring to the creative world.

“I’m delighted with how the festival went,” said Richard Mazza, LIC Arts Open director and artistic director at The Secret Theatre. “It’s definitely a higher quality festival than last year.”

The event began several years ago as a two-day, open studio event, mainly showcasing visual artists. Mazza sought to transform LIC Arts Open into a multi-studio event, larger and more widely encompassing than ever before.

“The event mushroomed in size,” said Mazza. “It was kind of like a bit of a surprise. I knew it would be successful.”

This year’s festival brought art unseen at previous gatherings to the foreground, marking the debut of performance pieces at the LIC Arts Open. Mazza also revealed that sculpture, a medium he believed was underrepresented at previous festivals, was more abundant during this year’s celebration.

“It’s hard to present more sculpture, especially the larger pieces,” said Mazza. “It’s hard to transport them and display them. Fairing events like get shown more in galleries. Sculpture is a less accessible form of art.”

Ten years ago, Gotham Center at Queens Plaza was a desolate industrial hall. During the festival, hundreds of one-of-a-kind, 10 x 10 canvases lined the walls of the now-revitalized hub. The works, donated by both well-known and under-

ground artists, were available to be purchased by browsing patrons. Most of the proceeds went to fund LIC Arts Open events and the other half helped continue a program run by the Queens Council for the Arts.

Mazza remarked that many of the Gotham Center affair attendees had never seen an art exhibit before. He believed the event’s locale brought commuters passing through Queens Plaza station into the building, drawn by the crowd and the excitement.

“This kind of event makes art accessible to ordinary human beings,” said Mazza.

Photographer Orestes Gonzalez displayed his photo essay, “Portraits of Artists 2010-2012,” depicting LIC creatives in their studios. “I think [the festival] went really well,” said Gonzalez. “We had twice as many participants this year. There was a lot more traffic as far as the public was concerned. There were a lot more interesting exhibits. It’s gaining force in other parts of the city as well.”

Gonzalez believes the LIC Arts Open publicizes a group of artists formerly flying under the radar. “The festival is about making a statement about the artists of LIC,” said Gonzalez. “It puts the artists of Queens on the map. Everyone’s always looking at Manhattan and Brooklyn, but there’s a huge amount of artistic activity here.”

Bentley De Baubouere, a local artist whose works were on display during the LIC Arts Open, created a contest where 200 kids from across the borough ages five to 16, created post-its in line with the theme of De Baubouere’s latest collection, “Green Earth.”

“It was perfect to do the contest with children because they will be the next generation to deal with Earth and these problems,” said De Baubouere. “They can speak freely. The kids are very imaginative and full of ideas. They express themselves differently. It was very unique.”