

From the Ledge

Musings on art, theater, film and culture—without a safety net

Artropolis Chicago Is Coming!

In a week and a half, Chicago will be buzzing with artists, art collectors, gallery owners, the international media, and ordinary art loving folks like me and my friends, as [Artropolis Chicago](#) takes place for the second straight year at the Merchandise Mart from April 25-28, 2008. The Mart, under its President, Christopher Kennedy, took over the much maligned and drama-filled [Art Chicago](#) and paired it with a variety of other art fairs, including its own [International Antiques Fair](#), under the umbrella of Artropolis, a weekend celebration of “art, antiques, and culture” in a bid to put Chicago back on the international art scene map again (Art Chicago was one of the top art fairs in the world in the 1980s). Judging from the reviews, participating artists and galleries, and audience turnout last year, I think the city made a terrific strong impression which should make this year’s Artropolis even more of a must-go destination for the denizens of the global art world (although Art Basel Miami and the Armory Show in New York continue to be seen as the premier North American art fairs). I was overwhelmed last year by the amount of art that was exhibited, and the variety of media that were on display, from painting, sculpture, and photography, to video installations and site-specific installations. It was impossible to really take advantage of the Artropolis experience in a single weekend, given the fact that in addition to viewing the art, there were lectures, live performances, and parties to attend if you wished to. My main quibble last year was the fact that the Bridge Art Fair, which was the showcase for emerging, cutting-edge, “younger” art, and [The Artist Project](#), which was an exhibit of 30 independent/unrepresented artists, were housed in a tacky wing of the Chicago Apparel Center, right next to the Mart, whose temperature was similar to that of a Finnish sauna. I was loving and soaking up the Art Chicago exhibits, housed together with the Antiques Fair and the [Intuit Show of Folk and Outsider Art](#) in the main Merchandise Mart building, and glowing with that high that one gets when in the midst of stunning, unique, interesting art work; but then I had to traipse over to the Apparel Center, through a long walkway that felt like a sterile hospital corridor, and then emerged onto the two fairs, which were so poorly-laid out and cramped I felt I was in a Marrakech bazaar, without the Moroccans! Anyway, there will be no such problem this year since Art Chicago moves to the 12th floor of the Mart and the [Next Art Fair](#) (which has supplanted Bridge) moves into the 7th Floor, with the Artist Project, the Antiques Fair and the Intuit show all sharing the 8th floor.

Yes, I am very excited about Art Chicago since 180 of the world’s top art galleries, spanning acknowledged international arts cities such as New York, Paris, London, Tokyo, and Berlin, as well as our own sweet home Chicago (represented by fabulous top-tier galleries such as Linda Warren, Perimeter, and moniquemeloche). But I am so much more excited by the Next Art Fair, organized by Chicago gallery owner Kavi Gupta and New York art critic Christian Viveros-Faune, which is an invitational exhibit of emerging, cutting-edge, mind-expanding art. In addition to galleries (from cities as diverse as Chicago, New York, Leipzig, Guayaquil, and Krakow, which is reputedly starting to be the center for emerging art in Europe), project spaces, artists collectives and publications are participating (in a section of Next called Goffo). [Sonnenzimmer](#) from my northside neighborhood, which has received good press for its print series, is one of the artist collectives that is participating. Next will also have Next Talk Shop, a series of panel discussions and lectures. I am planning to attend the art criticism one that Viveros-Faune is moderating, scheduled for Saturday, the 26th at 10 am. I predict Next will be quite the blow-your-socks-off part of Artropolis.

The other art fair I will be spending some time in is The Artist Project, which is the independent artist exhibition. From 30 artists last year, it has grown to 300 artists this year, including someone I’ve been advocating for, the lovely and talented Sarah Stec. [In this blog post](#), you can read about the GreasyJoan Halloween event at Sarah’s West Loop loft gallery/work space, and see a sample of her work. To see some more of her work, check out her website: <http://www.sarahstec.com/>. She does wonderful and imaginative work with cheese cloth and other fabric, and incorporates them into dazzling visual displays such as her “Fog in Trees” series (yes, full disclosure, I own a piece). To my dear avid blog readers, please stop by Sarah’s booth in the Artist Project, number 8-4107, aisle 4000. You’ll be floored by the work, but more so by the unassuming, articulate artist responsible for it. But check out the rest of the artists booths, because independent artists need to be supported and appreciated.

I’ll be going to the Preview Event for Art Chicago, Next, and The Artist Project on April 24 to support Sarah and the Chicago art community (but I’ll be coming back a lot over the weekend, since I’m sure I will not be able to see everything on the 24th, plus with booze in the system, art appreciation may tend to become hazy!). I’ll also be attending the Artropolis/Art Chicago opening party on the 25th, called A Bowler Hat, at some warehouse space in River West. Artists will be transforming the raw space (should be quite interesting). I’ll post coverage of both events on From the Ledge. Artropolis is one of the great opportunities available to us living in a global city like Chicago- my dear blog readers, don’t squander it, don’t even think twice of going!