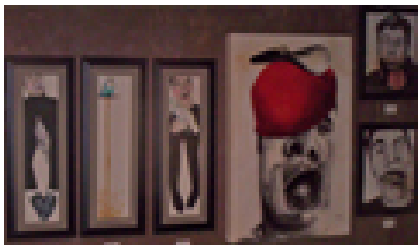


Lessons for Outsider Artists: Do-It-Yourself Attitude Yields Spring Harvester Show

Written by Steve Banks

Tuesday, 01 August 2006 23:14

- [Buy Cheap SmileOnMyMac textexpander 3 MAC](#)
- [Buy OEM Magix Samplitude 11](#)
- [Buy Cheap IMSI TurboFLOORPLAN Landscape and Deck 12](#)
- [Buy OEM Adobe Photoshop CS4 Extended](#)
- [Buy Cheap Autodesk AutoCAD 2013 MAC \(64-bit\)](#)
- [Buy OEM Microsoft Windows 8.1 Enterprise \(32-bit\)](#)
- [Discount - Corel VideoStudio Pro X4](#)
- [Buy OEM Adobe Dreamweaver CS6 Student And Teacher Edition MAC](#)
- [Discount - Lynda.com - Outlook 2013 Essential Training](#)
- [259.95\\$ Autodesk AutoCAD Architecture 2010 \(32 bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [79.95\\$ ARTS PDF Aerialist cheap oem](#)
- [Discount - ABest Video to WMV SWF FLV Converter](#)



You open the door and are engulfed by the plump and relentless beats from the DJ. The cave-like basement has pockets of illumination that attract buzzing swarms of twenty- and thirty-somethings to clusters of art, like chicly clad insects to an irresistible bug zapper. The art ranges from jarring paintings, whimsical sketches, and disconcerting collages to kinetic sculptures with whirling wheels of spurs and cast turds on a stick gathered in some kind of dookie Stonehenge.

This was the energetic scene at the Harvester show this spring in Cedar Rapids. The two-day show was a culmination of more than five months of grassroots work by three friends who shared a vision of helping showcase the artistic endeavors of non- or under-represented artists in Iowa. Their journey and lessons can be used by local artists who want to develop their own venue or event.

The Quad Cities suffer from a dearth of places for artists to exhibit their work. Between MidCoast Fine Arts, Quad City Arts, The Peanut Gallery, and Mode Gallery, artists are competing for roughly eight venues. If each of these venues averages one show every two months showcasing the work of two artists, that means a maximum of 96 artists get a major showing of their work each year.

Lessons for Outsider Artists: Do-It-Yourself Attitude Yields Spring Harvester Show

Written by Steve Banks

Tuesday, 01 August 2006 23:14

Programs such as MidCoast's Art Under Glass were an excellent way to accommodate some of the art surplus. MidCoast rotated artists' work in the large display windows of various under-utilized buildings in downtown Davenport and Rock Island.

But as the buildings began to attract new tenants, the Art Under Glass program was slowly squeezed out - a victim of its own success. That again meant fewer available venues.

The organizational nucleus of Harvester is artist Steve Gloekner, his wife Thais Carnall, and their friend Keith Adams. The idea for the show emerged at a Christmas party where they were discussing the difficulties faced by artists (in general) and Steve (in particular) in finding places to show work.

The concept of Harvester was fixing that situation. The challenge was turning the concept into reality. Harvester, much like the Art Under Glass program, was a relatively inexpensive way to reach many people.

"Steve's often felt that he's had to censor what he painted in order to get into certain places," Carnall said. "When your art isn't easily marketable and doesn't fill the role of making a wall look pretty, it can be tough to find a show. So with that in mind, we figured there had to be other artists that felt that way, so we thought, 'Hey, let's do our own.'"

Artists usually work in dense series in which they slowly and incrementally explore an idea. The results can range from documenting the interactions and slight variations between colors or textures to mimicking the absurdity of pop culture by meticulously populating an installation with thousands of green plastic army men who are protecting a pyramid made from more than 200 fast-food burgers.

Of course, it's difficult to find a venue for work that isn't obviously "sell-able" or was created to challenge the viewer. Even if a gallery is interested in this type of work, it only has room for the "mile markers" of a series and lacks the space to showcase the nuance found in closely related works.

Lessons for Outsider Artists: Do-It-Yourself Attitude Yields Spring Harvester Show

Written by Steve Banks

Tuesday, 01 August 2006 23:14

"One of the biggest challenges was finding the perfect spot to hold the show," Carnall explained. "We were looking for a space that was very raw and that would let the art create the atmosphere. Atmosphere was really important. I went through some pretty cool spaces: an old church, a warehouse that had been converted into a loft-like living space."

They settled on the large (more than 4,000 square feet) basement at the Cabinet Studio Building in Cedar Rapids, near the industrial center of town. The walls were rough in places and had some peeling paint, but overall the space did not force its personality on the event; it was more like working on a blank canvas. Instead of paying top dollar for a pristine space, they relied on the energizing power of the artwork to help transform the venue.

The next challenge was preparing the space for the show. "Keith was a huge asset when it came to things like creating our own lights to provide individual lighted spaces for 23 artists," Carnall said.

"We spent days scouring newspapers and swap sheets for lights and building materials," Adams said. "We bought 115 track lights with no track for \$75, requiring us to wire each light ourselves. With the help of a great group of volunteers, we cleaned the space, painted the walls, wired and hung the lights, developed the graphics, worked with the artists, and handed out fliers. ... If we didn't know, we learned. Everyone involved knows how to wire a light now"

It required a lot of time and manpower but not a lot of money. Adams said the largest expense was purchasing a domain name (<http://www.harvestercr.com>) and hosting the show's Web site.

This became a simple and inexpensive way to spread the word about the show. The site covered basics such as date, time, cover charge, and location, as well as a sneak peak at the artwork. This saved the organizers printing and mailing costs.

The event brought together artists from Cedar Rapids and as far away as Storm Lake, Dubuque, and Fairfield, with some familiar names such as Kettle (who recently had work at Mode) and Vanessa Vobis (who had some pieces in *Song for ...* this past spring at the Catich Gallery). (I also was one of the artists selected for the exhibit.)

Lessons for Outsider Artists: Do-It-Yourself Attitude Yields Spring Harvester Show

Written by Steve Banks

Tuesday, 01 August 2006 23:14

To cover their costs, the organizers charged a \$5 cover and a 25-percent commission on sales. With more than 200 paid admissions and commissions on more than \$3,000 in sales, it was a break-even proposition for Harvester.

"Just before the opening, I said it would be great to have a large crowd," Adams said. "But even if no one attends, we organized the event we set out to create."

The Harvester Web site remains, and the organizers are considering handling online sales of work by "Harvester artists."

There is already talk of another Harvester event. "We would like to explore different ideas related to people's interest and hobbies," Adams said. "There has been some talk of a home-brew festival, fashion show, and custom culture fair." Gloekner also mentioned "a small film fest, art in the park"

In the Quad Cities, we have plenty of under-used venues in our downtown areas that might be available cheaply for one-time art events. Despite many peoples' excellent efforts to provide spaces to show art, there is much artwork still not being seen. As Carnall, Adams, and Gloekner demonstrated, that can be remedied with a low-cost short-term show.