

Papier fair showcases affordable artwork

Admission-free exhibit is all about accessibility

BY JOHN POHL, THE GAZETTE APRIL 7, 2012

It's the job of a gallery owner to find art that suits a potential buyer - even if the search leads to another establishment, says Emilie Grandmont-Bérubé, coowner of Galerie Trois Points.

Next weekend the search will be considerably easier, as Papier 12 gathers 38 galleries representing more than 400 artists into one temporary structure at Bleury St. and de Maisonneuve Blvd., just off the northwest corner of Place des Festivals.

As the name suggests, Papier 12 features works on paper - usually the least expensive art you can buy. And Papier 12, which has no admission charge, is all about accessibility, added Grandmont-Bérubé, who is also treasurer of the organization behind the art fair, the Contemporary Art Galleries Association (AGAC).

It starts Thursday with a VIP fundraiser that costs \$135 per person. The fundraiser is especially important because Papier 12 didn't get a grant from the Quartier des spectacles, as it did last year, to offset some of the \$50,000 it costs to stage the event, said AGAC director Julie Lacroix.

Papier 12 opens to the public Friday at noon, with a vernissage starting at 6 p.m. The fair continues April 14 and 15 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

But before the fair opens on Friday, corporate collectors will have two hours to themselves to check out the offerings.

Loto-Québec spent \$90,000 last year, Lacroix said, and is expected to be a buyer this year as well.

Hydro-Québec has promised to spend at least \$20,000.

This week, Papier advertised on its Facebook page a chance for five members of the public to shop with the corporate collectors on Friday morning. Within an hour, Papier had its five neophyte collectors, Lacroix said.

Developing an art market in Montreal is part of the rationale for the Papier fairs.

There are roundtable discussions on collecting art on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

One of the topics is buying art on a limited budget. You can purchase a good-quality original artwork for \$500 or less, Grandmont-Bérubé said.

AGAC is also involved in an initiative with the city of Montreal's Accès culture to promote art-collecting through exhibitions of private art collections at nine Maisons de la culture, city hall, the Arsenal and the

Verdun Cultural Centre.

Despite this collaboration with city hall, government support of the arts is seen by some as detrimental to the growth of an art market in Montreal. It creates a perception in the public mind that individuals don't have to buy art because the government supports the artists, said Robert Poulin, who will show works from his collection at the Maison de la culture Marie Uguay, starting April 17.

Whether or not it's relevant to that argument, Quebec has nearly twice as many government-supported artist-run centres as Ontario, home of the country's strongest art market - Toronto.

Six of Toronto's best private art galleries have booths at Papier 12. There are also two from Ottawa and one from Halifax.

Lacroix hopes to add galleries from New York next year, when Papier 13 will have larger quarters within the Quartier des spectacles.

There could be room for 10 additional exhibitors next year, as well as more space for galleries and visitors, said François Babineau, an assistant at Galerie Simon Blais and member of the AGAC board. Last year the fair drew 9,000 visitors and was packed each day, he said.

Galerie Simon Blais is one of the participants concurrently exhibiting works on paper in their galleries. Du bon usage de l'acide opened this week at the gallery, with intaglio prints (etchings) by such artists as Betty Goodwin, whose work will also be available at Papier.

Some galleries will restrict their displays at Papier 12 to one or two artists.

Galerie Trois Points will show works by Natalie Reis and Elmyrna Bouchard, who uses rubber stamps to make prints that resemble textiles. Parisian Laundry will give Jaime Angelopoulos, a young Toronto artist, a solo show in its booth. "We showed her last fall and we had tremendous success," said gallery assistant Dacil Kurzweg. "A couple of corporate collections acquired her work, as well as the Department of Foreign Affairs."

Each visitor will be offered a free catalogue featuring one artist from each gallery. There are guided tours each day, with tours in English given at 3 p.m. on Friday, 5 p.m. on April 14 and 3 p.m. on April 15.

Critical Mass, a group of four brightly painted wood sculptures by Shayne Dark, will grace the outdoor entrance. (Dark will have an exhibition, Forged Landscape, at Art Mur, starting April 26.) Elise Legrand and Simon DurocherGosselin will perform a dance with the sculptures during the Thursday and Friday vernissages.

Grandmont-Bérubé said art grows with its owner. "The way you feel about it changes over time and you see things you've never seen before, even if you've lived with it for 20 years."

Papier 12 opens Friday and continues to April 15 at Bleury St. and de Maisonneuve Blvd. Free entry.

Visit papiermontreal.com

john.o.pohl@gmail.com

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