



The Star-Ledger

Open door policy

Major exhibits, a gallery crawl, and maybe Yoko Ono -- all in Newark

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BY DAN BISCHOFF

Star-Ledger Staff

LAST YEAR the Newark Council on the Arts hosted a truly mind-expanding art show in central Newark that brought contemporary artists from hot new galleries in Brooklyn together with the city's own crew of painters and sculptors to create a hip venue, showing urban assemblage, paintings, sculpture, and even internationally known installation artists. That created a real buzz downtown, and this year the same folks hope to spark an even more combustible cultural mix.

Newark's Fifth Annual Artist Studio & Available Space Tour, "Open Doors 2006," begins Thursday with three major exhibitions, a gallery crawl, and a film screening, all designed to both give Newark's arts community exposure and to showcase available real estate in the city.

In addition to the downtown artists who will be throwing open their studio doors to visitors Sunday, artists from Manhattan, Brooklyn, and as far away as Berlin will be showing work in "Newark Between Us," the largest of the three shows, which runs Sunday-Dec. 17.

Newark-born sculptor Chakaia Booker, former Rutgers student and Fluxus art movement star Robert Watts, hot African-American cut-out artist Kara Walker and more than 100 other artists are taking part, among them Yoko Ono.

"I think Yoko's piece is just the perfect metaphor for Newark, which really is putting itself back together with these shows," says curator Rupert Ravens, who is organizing "Newark Between Us" for the Newark Arts Council.

"It's called her 'Mend Piece,' and it's two white chairs and a white table. On the table there are a couple of shattered teacups, some tape, string, and glue. You can sit down and actually mend the teacups or you can just do it in your mind." (Organizers say they don't know if Ono will attend the show.)

Scattered throughout the shows are Newark's own resident art stars, like teddy bear assassin German Pitre (he tars stuffed animals to the picture surface), shattered auto glass sculptor Charlee Swanson, Caribbean colorist Roy Crosse, ceramist Anker West, City Without Walls director Ben Goldman, and Aljira gallery director Victor Davson, among many, many more.

The exhibits

The first show to open is "Gallery 744," a juried show of emerging Newark artists curated by Yoland Skeete of the Sumei Multidisciplinary Art Center in Newark. It will feature the work of a score of artists on the first floor of the National Newark Building, 744 Broad St. An opening reception is 5-8 p.m. Sunday in the gallery; the show remains open to the public through Nov. 16.

A Gallery Crawl takes place Saturday, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sixteen art spaces, from Gallery Aferro at 73 Market St. to the Newark Museum at 49 Washington St., are included. Maps will be available at all locations. A bus tour departs from 581 Broad St. at Central Avenue at 5 p.m.

A two-day exhibition, the "Multiple Works" show, featuring 37 Newark and Jersey artists (including Pitre, Robert Bonnano, Li Zhang, Qazi Orange, and many others) is Saturday and Sunday, 1-6 p.m., in the Kislak Building, 581 Broad St. at Central Avenue.

Also on Saturday, the "Jailhouse Revival Exhibition NJIT/NJSOA," at 116 Summit Ave., third floor, curated by Matt Gosser, will bring 34 local artists, including Anker West, Swanson, Seth Goodwin, and curator Ravens himself to the fore. The opening reception is scheduled for 5-10 p.m. The shows runs through Nov. 16.

A film screening and discussion, "Enchanted Being: Everyday Ritual, Loss, Magic for the Affected and Infected by HIV/AIDS," will be held Saturday, 6-10 p.m. at 11 Halsey St.

Studio tour

The Open Doors Studio Tour is Sunday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Free bus tours of 37 studios, starting at 10 a.m. at 581 Broad St., will provide transportation to all sites throughout the day. Free parking will be available at 8 Central Ave., just behind the Kislak Building.

Also on Sunday, from 6-9 p.m., "Newark Between Us" is to open in 30,000 square feet of space on the sixth floor of the National Newark Building, 744 Broad St. Ninety-seven artists, from Newark, New York, and the world, will be featured, everyone from former Newark assemblage king Willie Cole to ironic performance artist William Pope L. The exhibition will remain open to the public through Dec. 17.

The major sponsors of "Open Doors 2006" are J.P. Morgan/Chase, Prudential Insurance Company of America, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, NJ Transit's Newark Light Rail, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and the City of Newark.

"I had no trouble getting space for this year's exhibitions," curator Ravens said of "Newark Between Us." "Last year, we held the big international exhibition on an empty floor in a Newark office tower (1 Washington Park), and the landlord rented out that floor and 13 more in the same building later that year. The show was a great promotion for the space."

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