

Party Arty

Seven days in a row, Artweek will mix free music, munchies, and works for sale by local artists at hot spots around town

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For more than two years, DJ and nightlife promoter Enrique Florendo brought visual art to an unlikely audience - night clubbers.

First at Umbria, then at News, and finally at Good Life, Florendo ran a regular night where people danced to DJ music while they checked out work by local artists. He called it Galleria.

It was Florendo's way to get the club crowd to multi task. He wanted them to mix and mingle, but also to spend time taking in the city's visuals.

"I'm an art lover, first and foremost," he said. "It sort of brings something different to the nightlife, more of an intellectual aspect of it."

Galleria was popular, but there was a problem: "People weren't buying the art," he said.

That's why after more than two years, Florendo stopped running Galleria this past summer. He had already started participating in the promotion of other arts events, such as "in+eract 2," an art party this March at Villa Victoria. He also teamed up with Tim Whitehair, another nightlife promoter who ran a similar art night at 33 Restaurant & Lounge, to start a more subdued local exhibition event at Vinalia. The regular Wednesday night party at the Downtown Crossing venue has featured live jazz, wine and cheese, and work by emerging artists. It caters to the afterwork crowd, people who may have more money to spend on the finer things in life.

"We're entrepreneurs," Florendo said. "We figured if we're doing this, we might as well tap into another market."

This week, Florendo and Whitehair are expanding their efforts by hosting their first-ever Artweek, seven nights of 21-plus art parties for Boston's professional crowd. Until Dec. 15, the men will bring work by a handful of local artists to a different venue each night. The free events will include live entertainment by DJs or a band, as well as complimentary bites from the venue and sips from alcohol sponsors such as Christiania Vodka.

"We wanted to capture more of the adult market," Florendo said, "art-loving people who actually have disposable income to purchase art."

The works will cost between \$500 and \$10,000.

Whitehair said the week aims to help artists (including himself) who have found it increasingly difficult to find exhibition space around town. Whitehair started his art night at 33 Restaurant because he believed nightlife venues should help with the problem by donating their wall space to new artists who don't have the reputation to get a gallery contract.

When artists can't find a place to show their creations, they "wind up moving to New York," he said. "We lose those cultural resources."

Florendo and Whitehair said this Artweek is practice for an even bigger event in the spring. Whitehair added that he even hopes to take the concept on the road and host a similar week featuring Boston art in Miami.

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"We're trying to capture the talent that's here and take it to a grand scale," he said.

Some of the artists you'll see during this week's events worked with Florendo during his Galleria nights. They include Lisa Finch, a Massachusetts College of Art graduate, who will show venue-appropriate works such as "Calm Echo," a painting inspired by house music.

Others artists involved in Artweek are newcomers to the scene. Florendo and Whitehair found most of the new faces through friends.

One is Marisa Oge, who will show her works for the first time in Boston on Friday at the Good Life. Oge has been painting watercolor landscapes as well as acrylic and oil paintings of women for years, but she hasn't had much time to find gallery space since she moved to Boston for a graduate degree in public health.

"It's a great opportunity for me," she said. "I think galleries are pretty difficult."

Florendo said he imagines that after artists find out about Artweek, they'll compete for space in the spring.

"This is the dry run," he said. "The spring event will be the big one."

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Artweek Schedule

Sunday

Bar Lola, 160 Commonwealth Ave.,

617-266-1122. barlola.com

7 to 10 p.m.

Entertainment: life flamenco performance

Various lithographs

Monday

Via Matta, 79 Park Plaza,

617-422-0008. viamattarestaurant.com

7 p.m.

Entertainment: DJ set by Yuki

Artist: Lisa Finch, Duncan Reid

Tuesday

Pho Republique, 1415 Washington St.,

617-262-0005. phorepublique.net

10 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Entertainment: DJ set

Artist: Jen Roberts

Wednesday

Vinalia, 34 Summer St,

617-737-1777. vinaliaboston.com

10 p.m. to midnight

Entertainment: Circus Band (jazz and world music)

Artist: Ivan Brens

Thursday

Zocalo, 1414 Commonwealth Ave., Brighton,

617-277-5700. zocalobrighton.com

7 to 10 p.m.

Entertainment: music by Brother Cleve

Artists: various artists including Tim Whitehair, and Manuel Rodriguez

Friday

Good Life, 28 Kingston St.,

617-451-2622. goodlifebar.com

9 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Entertainment: Band of Gypsies (Latin pop, acoustic), and DJs Francesco Spagna and Enrique Florendo

Artists: Marisa Oge, Marie Share, Margaret Whitehair, and Nicole Olenio feature their work "The Female Perspective"

Saturday

Loft space at 325 Columbus St.

noon to 8 p.m.

A collection of Artweek artists

For more information, visit galleriaboston.com.■