

THE ART MARKET

Free admission: a look at Vancouver's public art

Kate Barron and Merete Kristiansen | Posted: Jan 20th, 2011



Walking Figures, Magdalena Abakanowicz

This week Vancouver has been celebrating the developments of upcoming public art projects, like the new Terry Fox sculptures designed by Douglas Coupland that will be installed at BC Place. So we felt it was a great time to talk about the amazing public art that our city already has to offer.

Great cities are built for the people, and Vancouver is no exception. But, when was the last time you went for an art walk – or even stopped to admire a piece of public art in Vancouver? Sculptures, memorials, fountains and graffiti are everywhere, yet if you are not familiar with where to look then how would you even get started?

One of the best resources is the City of Vancouver's public art website, which includes everything from maps, policies, current projects and a registry of works. You should also check out the website for the Vancouver Biennale and the accompanying podcasts. You can listen to a short talk on specific public art pieces streamed from your iPod as you stand in front of them.

There are so many great works in this city, but here are just a few of our faves that should not be missed.

1. Walking Figures



This monumental sculpture of nine enormous (approximately 9 ft tall), headless cast iron figures is a Legacy piece from the 2005-2007 Vancouver Biennale and was just recently moved from Queen Elizabeth Park. Walking without reason, these figures are heavy in weight and in meaning. Intending to convey time and loss, this world-renowned artist commonly references her childhood, having grown up during WWII and post-war Poland. The nine are part of a larger group of figures cast at the same time, some of which are a permanent installation in Chicago's Grant Park. Positioned right outside of a Canada-line stop, we love the juxtaposition of these robotic figures against the real life crowd. Fully deserving of their new prominent space, we feel this was a great move.

Artist: Magdalena Abakanowicz

Where: Broadway and City Hall Canada-Line Station

2. Jimmi Hendrix Mural



You probably already knew that Jimmi Hendrix was a Seattle native. But what you might not know, is that most of his family was from Strathcona. To honour this Vancouver connection, this mural of Jimmi and his grandmother Zenora, can be found not far from where the Hendrix family used to live. This piece, which is part of the Strathcona BIA mural program, was intended to beautify and help create a positive image for the area and support our local artists. For a relatively new city, it's great to be reminded of our cultural history.

Artist: Nelson Garcia Xochitl Garcia-Leal

Where: Scottish Line Painting, 1030 East Cordova



3. Digital Orca

One of Vancouver's most beloved and well known public art pieces is the Digital Orca at the new convention centre. The familiar symbol of the West Coast is represented by 3D cubes, giving the appearance of a 2D object. It's kind of like looking at a photograph with really bad resolution. Old news to you? Go back at night and see this beautiful orca lit up with tiny LED lights - something we just learned ourselves. The Digital Orca is one of 11 major works and several smaller ones that contribute to the look and feel of the convention centre. Mr. Coupland asked, "Can you do something that can come up to equal the space it's in?" We think he has.

Artist: Douglas Coupland

Where: Vancouver Convention Centre, 1055 Canada Place

4. Graffiti Wall, Gastown



Graffiti can get a bad rap, but when it's done like this it's worth taking note of. Full of colour, this visual overload will welcome you into a back alley, and you won't even realize you're standing next to a dumpster. While we're not too sure who makes up the list of contributing artists, we do know that an alley with this amount of talent and work poured into it should be on your must see list whether you're checking out other public artworks or just in the neighborhood.

Artist: Multiple Artists

Where: Back lane between Hastings Street & Cordova Street / Homer Street & Richards Street

5. Words on the Fairmont Pacific Rim



Adorning the exterior of one of Vancouver's newest hotels are two foot high stainless steel letters, reflecting the city around them, that wrap the

building from the 5th to the 22nd floor.

"Lying on top of a building the clouds looked none nearer than when I was lying on the street" can appear to some as just letters pressed against one another, but the best part of this piece is how it forces you to pay attention to make sense of what you're seeing. Westbank and Peterson Investment Group commissioned this million-dollar work as a contribution to Vancouver's public art.

Artist: Liam Gillick

Where: Fairmont Pacific Rim, 1038 Canada Place

Public art in Vancouver is an enormous topic to tackle and we realize that we've only scratched the surface. We'll be digging a little deeper in upcoming articles to highlight projects you might not know about.

Why all the sudden interest in public art? A lot of hard work and money is invested into these projects and we think it's about time that more of people went out and appreciated them. There is only so much a computer can tell you about a piece, and as with all art, it is better experienced in person. So grab some comfy shoes and go see them for yourself.

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(7) Comments

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It's great that you've

P2K January 20th 2011 | 12:12 PM

It's great that you've included graffiti art - so often overlooked.

I Agree (16)

I Disagree (10)

They don't know what it is... but they like it

eric January 21st 2011 | 6:06 AM

"A lot of hard work and money is invested into these projects and we think it's about time that more of people went out and appreciated them. ..."

I hope you don't mean that partial bits of people are going out to see them. I'll leave the 'appreciate' out of it because that is so subjective - particularly and especially when we are discussing or contemplating ART.

Perhaps some good professional photographs to illustrate this piece would help stimulate us to get out and see. All the pieces you have cited are visual pieces yet, let's be charitable here, the photographs are pedestrian abysmal snapshots.

I Agree (17) I Disagree (18)

Thank you!

Ali January 21st 2011 | 11:11 AM

I love your articles! They're easy to read and actually make me want to go out and get involved with thr arts. Ths is actually cool stuff - Hendrix?! Who know that!! Re: whoever is hating on your pics- this isn't Time Magazine people. There's always critics - don't let them get you guys down!

I Agree (19) I Disagree (15)

Good work Girls

Ben J. January 21st 2011 | 11:11 AM

Re: Eric

"pedestrian abysmal snapshots" Dude, you are the EXACT stereotype people have of those in the arts. I'm an average guy who would never feel confident enough to go into a gallery and it's guys like you that validate that feeling.You're clearly so above all of this and know everything - so why don't you just keep your feelings to yourself in your delusion of superiority.

Thanks girls for your wicked FREE site and for writing these stories for the rest of us girls!

Keep em coming!

-Ben

I Agree (25) I Disagree (14)

Art Admirer

trebletrail January 21st 2011 | 3:15 PM

Great article!

I Agree (25) I Disagree (11)

LOVE

Monty January 22nd 2011 | 12:12 PM

Thank you so much...you've inspired me to take my family on an art walk around the city!

I Agree (18) I Disagree (15)

Great article! I didn't even

CoastalSprite February 24th 2011 | 8:20 PM

Great article! I didn't even know about most of these!

I Agree (13) I Disagree (11)