

# north shore news

## Vancouver Biennale opens borders

### Art exhibition turning Pipe Shop on North Van waterfront into International Pavilion

[Jeremy Shepherd](#) / North Shore News

June 20, 2014 12:00 AM

Vancouver Biennale 2014-2016. For more information visit [vancouverbiennale.com](http://vancouverbiennale.com).

It was born in Venice, and after crossing an ocean and a century, landed on North Vancouver's waterfront with the intention of staying the summer.

The Vancouver Biennale's 2014-2016 exhibition is upon us.

Inspired by that first festival in 1895, the Biennale is a festival with films, art installations, and museums drenched in sunshine.

"The open air museum brings neighbourhoods together and people together," says Vancouver Biennale president Barrie Mowatt.

Fluttering banners along Lonsdale Avenue will funnel the curious to North Vancouver's Pipe Shop, which is set to transform into a 9,000 square foot International Pavilion displaying Brazilian art.

"The dream was that we would be able to engage our participating communities in hosting a pavilion," Mowatt says.

The Pavilion will provide viewers with broader view of a country that is often turned into a glittering, feather-covered caricature.

"It will really be about the contemporary art scene and how invigorated it is and how significant it is and how it relates to Brazil's economic rise in the world," Mowatt explains.

The Pavilion also affords contemporary Brazilian artists to explore and enjoy Vancouver, Mowatt explains.

"They would never allow in Brazil, in the big cities, children to walk without being held hand in hand and arm in arm. Here, they felt comfortable and free," he says.

Mowatt's comments are frequently punctuated by a ringing phone as he attempts to co-ordinate 140 artists and curators with three-zone transit passes navigating through New Westminster, North Vancouver, Vancouver and Squamish.

A former educator, psychologist and art dealer, Mowatt places ultimate emphasis on learning.

"Everything's based on education. If we don't learn how to learn and be open to learning, our society is destined to be limited by Fox News."

With that same sense of education in mind, trips through the Pavilion will be done in 30-40 minute tours, "We think it's important that people actually understand the learning process," Mowatt says, explaining the plethora of "conceptual/intellectual" works being exhibited.

The event is also an attempt to open borders, both literally and metaphorically.

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, perhaps best known for designing the Beijing stadium used in the 2008 Olympics shortly before repudiating the Olympics, will give several films their Canadian debut at the Biennale.

"He won't be coming physically unless the Chinese government give permission," Mowatt says.

However, he is hoping to engage Weiwei via Skype.

"Always open borders," Mowatt says.

The success of the Biennale is largely measured in inspiration, Mowatt explains.

"Hopefully more sponsors and more philanthropists will come forward and say we want to keep this piece in our region, and hence write a cheque so that our communities are enlivened with some of the greatest art in the world," he says.

The Biennale opened with a filmmaking master class featuring iconoclast director Oliver Stone and North Vancouver writer/actress Taylor Hill.

Hill and director Gary Hawes teamed up in 2013 to make *Leap 4 Your Life*, a mockumentary based on the bizarre characters and their even more bizarre mothers who populate an annual dance contest.

When Hill got the Biennale's email invitation, which included *Leap 4 Your Life* and Oliver Stone in the subject, line, she initially dismissed it as spam.

The class was partially about making movies seem like a more approachable task, according to Hill.

"Filmmaking and making a movie can sound really intimidating and unattainable," she says.

Hill and Hawes - who has worked on colossal productions like *X2* and *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* - both stressed the benefits of working with friends.

"It's rare to have a positive filmmaking experience. So much can go wrong, especially on the bigger budget films where you just get caught up in the amount of money, the politics," Hawes says. "It's quite refreshing to just make a film with a bunch of likeminded people that happen

to be your friends."

While shopping for a distributor for *Leap 4 Your Life*, Hill is already at work on her next script.

"I just finished writing a romantic comedy. ... that hopefully Gary will direct, wink, wink."

"I'm holding out for a lot of money," Gary replies, laughing, before saying he's already agreed to stand behind the camera for *Let's Be Friends*.

The story of love troubles is reminiscent of stories like *500 Days of Summer* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*, according to the filmmaking team.

One of Hawes' favourites, *The Notebook*, may also have an influence.

"Anyone who doesn't like *The Notebook* is severely jaded," Hawes says.

For Hill, who once had to choose between buying a car or making a movie, the path is clear.

"I just want to keep making movies with my friends," she says.

© North Shore News