

BEST OF VANCOUVER

Best of Vancouver 2015: Arts

by Staff on September 30th, 2015 at 12:58 PM

SHARED 74



Best public-art car pileup: Marcus Bowcott's *Trans Am Totem*.

For the Georgia Straight's 20th annual Best of Vancouver issue, our editorial team provides some insight into the irreverent details that make our city great. Here's our contributors' picks for Best of Vancouver 2015.

BEST OF VANCOUVER 2015

The Georgia Straight's 20th annual Best of Vancouver

Best public-art car pileup

We love everything about North Vancouver artist Marcus Bowcott's subversive public

artwork titled *Trans Am Totem*: five crushed cars on top of an old-growth red-cedar stump installed near the Georgia Viaduct (at Quebec Street and Milross Avenue) as part of the Vancouver Biennale. We love the way it comments on how Vancouver's environmental piety clashes with its crass consumer culture. We love the way it parodies the fast cars racing by below and above it. We love the way it funks up the staid architecture of the glass apartment towers around it. We love the way it harks back to the forests and then the sawmills that once sat by False Creek. And most of all, we love the retro junkyard cars—from the macho white 1981 Trans Am down to the little pink VW Rabbit.

Best places to find art in the park

Turning the former cottages of park custodians into places to make and see art? Brilliant, we say, as the fieldhouse artist-residency program has proven over the past couple of years. For fall 2015, there's a host of new artists bringing their creations to local green spaces. Some of our favourites include: Germaine Koh's League at the Elm Park Fieldhouse, where people meet each week to play games they've invented with each other; the workshops and other cartoon-making projects that Cloudscape Comics Collective is hosting at Memorial South Park Fieldhouse; Publik Secrets' giant bike-part gamelans and other found-object instruments at the Hadden Park Fieldhouse; and Mr. Fire-Man's (artist David Gowman's) wooden-instrument-making displays at Maclean Park Fieldhouse. And you thought parks were just for kicking the ball around.

Best New Arts Hubs

The Post at 750

110–750 Hamilton Street

BMO Theatre Centre

162 West 1st Avenue

Arts groups have traditionally operated out of dark, crowded backroom hovels. But space-starved Vancouver arts groups are getting it right: they're joining forces to build themselves new headquarters, resulting in not one but *two* vibrant, multi-use cultural facilities this year. At the Post, the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, Touchstone Theatre, Music on Main, and the DOXA Documentary Film Festival share an 8,500-square-foot city-leased facility in the downtown CBC studios. It comes with two

much-needed new studio spaces (which have sprung floors for dance rehearsals), complete with theatre lighting, sound separation for music, and projection for film—making it one of this town’s rare true multimedia hubs. The groups have an initial 10-year lease for the space, with options to renew for another 20 years, making it the kind of long-term home that is uncommon in the arts sector. Over at the BMO Theatre Centre, the city’s two biggest stage companies, the Arts Club Theatre Company and the Bard on the Beach Festival, have teamed up. Boasting a 250-seat theatre, four rehearsal halls, costume and props shops, and offices, the sleek glass-walled Olympic Village facility has just opened this fall. Watch for upcoming shows here: the new venue has state-of-the-art sound and lighting, flexible seating arrangements, and a full bar, reception area, and box office. Overall, the space gives both companies more opportunities to develop new productions as well as to grow their current education and training programs. There is power, it seems, in numbers.

Best way to brainstorm

If the boardroom isn’t exactly getting your creative juices flowing, get your ideas out in the open in a new way by renting out the Blank Tank Gallery (148 Alexander Street) for a Wall Jam. These idea sessions are facilitated by gallery founder Anuj Singhal. They’re intended to “transcend typical brainstorming practices” by letting participants draw and paint directly onto the walls of the gallery.

Best public art for selfies

Yue Minjun’s *A-maze-ing Laughter* at the foot of English Bay. Plenty of fun faces to imitate, and the beach provides a great backdrop.

Best place to play music in public

Pianos on the Street provides Vancouverites with a fun and free way to get musical in public. While some have already been moved in anticipation of fall’s wet weather, pianos have been placed in about two dozen locations around the Lower Mainland, inside and outdoors, giving passersby a chance to play a sonata beneath a weeping willow on Kits Beach or on the docks outside New Westminster’s River Market, among other spots.

Best example of art for and by the people

Head out to Deer Lake Park in Burnaby and check out the Community Clay Sculpture Project. With beams reaching toward the sky, it seems inspired by another public-art project: *Playground of the Gods* on Burnaby Mountain. At Deer Lake, three steel poles are covered in bricklike images highlighting Burnaby's past, present, and future. The project was conceived by Keith Rice-Jones, with the help of community volunteers, who made the images in workshops. The sculptures will never be shown at the Guggenheim, but they do reflect Burnaby's plucky community spirit.

Best place for one-stop holiday shopping

Circle Craft Christmas Market

Vancouver Convention Centre West (1055 Canada Place)

www.circlecraft.net/Christmas-Market

The holidays seem to get busier and come sooner each year (Christmas music in the first week of November?! Try again, Shoppers Drug Mart.) With all the parties, eggnog, planning, eggnog, decorating, and eggnog, shopping for presents is often just another chore to be endured. And for those who, at best, regard shopping with the same level of resignation as an upcoming dentist appointment, they'll appreciate something that allows them to get most of their holiday shopping done in a single day. From cozy wool socks to unique jewellery to kids' stuff, with a minimum level of schmaltz, the wares on display at the Circle Craft Christmas Market make holiday giving a breeze from November 11 to 15. And, hey: if you want to pick up some Rocky Road fudge for yourself, we won't tell. Just save us a piece, okay?