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Arts Council's 2nd Annual 'GLOBAL' Program Joins Long Beach October Events



Ryan Smolar, part owner of Smolarcorp, a creative media-consulting firm in Long Beach, and partner Rachel Potucek are both coordinators for this year's GLOBAL program to showcase art and culture through Long Beach events during the month of October. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

Effort Connects Artistic And Cultural Festivities,
Shapes Economic Development; More Than
700 Events On Calendar

■ By **SEAN BELK**
Staff Writer

For the past six months, the Arts Council for Long Beach has been gearing up for its 2nd annual collaborative effort to bring together hundreds of art and cultural events during the entire month of October. The program, known as GLOBAL, or Greater Long Beach Arts Lab, coincides with a national collective celebration of culture and art in America, marking National Arts and Humanities Month, put on by the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Arts Council is a city-funded non-profit established in 1978 that distributes grants and promotes arts in the city. It started GLOBAL after meeting with a broad cross-section

of arts leaders in Long Beach to find a way to reinvent the national designated month, which hadn't received much acclaim in the past. The effort now showcases the many culturally diverse and artistic aspects Long Beach has to offer, reaching out into almost every pocket of the city.

While GLOBAL's 2009 debut included an impressive 300 events, this year's program has more than doubled that number. The event's diverse line-up seeks to appeal to everyone and includes everything from plays and exotic dance performances to classes and art exhibits and even a full Italian family circus. The events all occur separately throughout the city on each day of the month. Arts Council Executive Director Craig Watson said that, so far, this year's program has more than 700 events, with the list continuing to grow.

"You look at what's going on just one day of the weekend and that's enough for you to do all month," said Ryan Smolar, GLOBAL coordinator and part owner of Smolarcorp, a creative media-consulting firm in Long Beach.



GLOBAL's easy-to-use Web site contains a list of events that interlink with other sites and send out email blasts of events through an innovative online calendar system called Limelight, developed by DOMA Properties. For a full itinerary, visit www.globallb.com.

“To a degree, the arts and cultural activities in a city demonstrate the health of a city and its citizens, and what we’re looking

Partnering with Rachel Potucek, Smolar has worked on a similar collaborative effort called University by the Sea and this year was responsible for designing GLOBAL's easy-to-use Web site of events, powered by an innovative online calendar system called “Limelight” (www.limelightlb.com), developed by DOMA Properties, that simultaneously interlinks with other sites to get the word out.

“There’s so much going on in our community that a lot of people just don’t have the info,” he said. “So we’re trying to create this singular central resource, that everyone can go to and put their information up to get information or find things to do.”

Watson said the Arts Council was able to “stretch dollars,” using a modest budget of only \$40,000 and support from corporate sponsors – and also simply by working with organizations that had already planned events. A big part of the effort was coordinating events to make sure they happen in October.

A Long-Term Vision

To some, the display of arts and culture in Long Beach – one of the most culturally diverse cities in the country – could be a launching pad for a broader vision of creative development within the city, imagined as a way to turn Long Beach into an urban artistic Mecca while jump starting economic growth.

For instance, the Arts Council has joined with many Business Improvement Districts throughout the city using art as a way for businesses to attract customers during hard economic times, while working with non-profits, museums and arts institutions to showcase their artistic and cultural appeal.

to do with GLOBAL is be economic development in the most traditional sense,” Smolar said.

Watson echoed the sentiment: “We are a global city and have such diverse artistic talent. National Arts and Humanities Month is our time to celebrate the power of the arts and explore the events and venues available in our own back yard.”

Meanwhile, public art displays and cultural events often help build a community’s cultural identity and inspire a sense of civic pride and ownership, according to Ed Kamlan, a spokesperson for the city and Long Beach Redevelopment Agency (RDA). The RDA has since incorporated public art and cultural engagement as “an innovative revitalization tool throughout the city,” he said.

In 1989, the RDA established the Percent for Public Arts program, requiring all new projects over \$250,000 in redevelopment areas to contribute 1 percent of construction costs toward funding public art. Such examples include the Aqua, Landmark Square and HarborPlace Tower developments on Ocean Boulevard that have incorporated art into their projects, as well as the city supporting art walks and transforming vacant storefronts into temporary art galleries.

One recent project is The Collaborative in downtown that opened September 18 with an exhibit called “Descartes.” Through a partnership with the Museum of Latin American Art (MoLAA) and the Arts Council, the project launched as a 1,200-square-foot art exhibit on the ground floor of the new Gallery 421 upscale apartment complex at 421 W. Broadway, built by developer Lyon Management Communities.

The GLOBAL program offers a chance to highlight the city's artistic accomplishments, exhibits and exhibitions for the community and visitors. "Our goal is to really make this a destination festival. It's not just for the local community. We want people to come to Long Beach because GLOBAL is happening so each of the weekends become sort of a powerhouse," Watson said.

Event Highlights

The GLOBAL program kicks off October 1 with the regular monthly event in Bixby Knolls called First Fridays, organized by the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association. "Art-Lantic Avenue," located on the northwest corner of Bixby and Atlantic Avenues, features a full night of art, music and activities from 6:30-8 p.m. Visitors can also participate in the event as well and are encouraged to bring something to stick on the "Leave Something Behind" collage, sign their names or write a poem. Art-Lantic Avenue also offers a Big Red Bus to transport event goers from one venue to another.

Also on October 1 is the Harvest Festival, considered the West Coast's largest and finest indoor craft show, with over 24,000 handmade items from artists throughout North America. The show is from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center. The event continues through the weekend.

On October 2, the Port of Long Beach holds its annual Green Port Fest at the Port Administration Building, 925 Harbor Plaza, with more than 70 displays and exhibits. The Fest will include a dance and music performance by the Xiao Bai Fan troupe of 25 children from Qingdao, China, a city that is celebrating its 25-year "sisterhood" with Long Beach. The troupe performs at the port at 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. (according to the port Web site) and is also performing at the Aquarium of the Pacific on October 3 at 1:30 p.m. (according to Aquarium Web site), and at a 25th anniversary dinner party on October 4, organized by the Long Beach- Qingdao Association. The Port Fest also features an appearance by world famous muralist and environmentalist Wyland, who painted the famous mural of whales called "Planet Ocean" on the side

of the Long Beach Arena in the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center. He will be taking part in an interactive exhibit and on hand to paint a "super-sized" canvas with the help of families and attendees.

Long Beach Opera, which doesn't start its season until January of next year, is also joining the festivities by hosting a gala on October 2 from 5-9 p.m. in the MoLAA sculpture garden at 628 Alamitos Ave. Guests will enjoy a celebration of the Opera's upcoming 2011 season, a live auction, dinner and an outdoor sneak peak of coming attractions.

The 7th annual SoundWalk takes place in the East Village Arts District on October 2 from 5-10 p.m., produced by the Long Beach artist group, FLOOD. The one-night event features 35 local and international artists displaying live sound art that can be heard coming from garages, parking lots and street corners throughout the area encompassing 3rd Street, Linden Avenue, Ocean Boulevard and Elm Avenue.

The following week, from October 7-10, the Richard & Karen Carpenter Performing Arts Center is presenting the Zoppe Italian Family Circus in Downtown Long Beach. A 500-seat tent will be set up at Long Beach Boulevard and Broadway. This family-friendly event includes acrobats, equestrian showmanship, clowning and audience participation. For tickets, go to: www.carpenterarts.org/1011-zoppe-circus.html.

The 7th Annual Belmont Shore Art Walk & Sidewalk Chalk Art Contest takes place October 23 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and showcases the work of chalk artists who will make the sidewalks of Belmont Shore their canvas. The event includes \$1,000 in cash prizes and a children's contest.

The Khmer Arts Academy, a Long Beach-based international arts organization, brings a royal Cambodian dance group to MoLAA on October 25. The group is founded by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, who was recently named a national heritage fellow by the National Endowment of the Arts. The event will include a 70th Anniversary Celebration and Children's Clinic.

For a full itinerary and calendar of events, visit www.glob-allb.com. ■