

Art Fusion featured in
Expletive Deleted Magazine

Art Fusion: Heartbeat of a city



Photo Credit: Daniel Anaka

Walking down Augusta Ave. through Kensington Market in Toronto, you can feel the creative heart of the city beating with bursts of colour, fire spinning in the park and vibrant colours painted on every wall. What you may not see however is the challenges many artists and creative professionals face in supporting themselves, their families and their passions.

Despite the odds, a small pocket of brave individuals have added some fuel to the flames. Lisa Chessari is the founder of Art Fusion, an open source art festival hosted every couple of months in

the city. Fascinated by what she's doing, we caught up with Lisa and asked her a little bit about her festival. Her mandate is perfectly simple: anyone can perform and be part of Art Fusion. This festival serves as a platform for individuals and artists collectives to perform and be promoted through Art Fusion's network of media professionals.

We were very curious to know what obstacles had come up in organizing Art Fusion. Lisa was disheartened by the fact that she had been rejected from a number of grants on the grounds that there was no audition process for artists to participate in Art Fusion.

The conversation then lead to asking what Lisa thought was missing from Toronto.. She replied that artists are not given a voice as individuals. They are spoken for by government funded institutions. Lisa believes these institutions are preventing Toronto artists from flourishing in five different ways:

1. The institutions create events to promote Canadian artists, yet neither the public nor the artists themselves have any say in the structure of the events, or who is being represented. How Art Fusion differs to Lisa is that it gives everyone a voice, the festival is situated around the participation and individual talents of each person.



Photo Credit: Scorpion Lens

2. The regimented structure of these institutionalized events according to Lisa, stifles the creativity of the artist. Art Fusion on the other hand has no schedule, it is an open platform for all individuals to participate in.

3. The process of selection creates conflict between creative individuals and divides the community by establishing a hierarchy and promoting elitism. What has made Art Fusion so successful in contrast Lisa said is the fact that every person is respected regardless of their level of expertise and encouraged to participate. It is a highly inclusive environment that promotes a sense of community.

4. These institutionalized events promote the institutions and not the artists themselves. To Lisa, they don't know how

to leverage artists and their approach again does not foster a communal feeling among artists. Her solution to this problem is simple; she promotes the individual artists through her online newsletter on the Art Fusion's Facebook page so each person, regardless of talent, can be recognized.

5. The funding given to these institutions is very often not pumped back into the community or the individuals. Lisa said the institutions channel most of the profit into red tape, and what Art Fusion does is it removes money from the equation. All artists can participate for free without restriction from these institutions who do not share their values. Without the red tape, these self sustaining communities like Art Fusion will encourage both artists and the public to come together and have their say.

In conclusion, Lisa stated that if Toronto wants to sustain its community then what needs to happen is a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive environment the likes of which can be seen in arts festivals across Europe and other parts of Canada. Lisa believes Art Fusion will be the beginning of this shift and hopes that the festival will will inspire others to become more involved.

We thanked Lisa humbly for her wonderful input on this important topic and we encourage you to come check out the next Art Fusion festival which will take place on Oct 19th (location to be decided). Show your support for your arts community and start a conversation. Got some feedback? Email it to us!



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