

Time Out

Hong Kong

KNOW MORE. DO MORE.
EVERY OTHER WEDNESDAY
TIMEOUT.COM.HK
March 4 - 17 2009
No. 23 HK\$18



INSIDE THE FASHION ISSUE: SECOND-FLOOR SHOPPING CULTURE ARE YOU AN INC? HOW TO BE YOUR OWN BRAND

PLUS! SURF'S UP - THE CITY'S BEST WIFI'D RESTAURANTS IN BED WITH THE DULCET DUFFY

Fashion gets real

Will work for COUTURE

Art

The third dimension



In the flesh Sculptors appearing live in West Kowloon Cultural District

World-class sculptors are breaking the mould in West Kowloon. **By Clare Morin**

They appear out of the mist on the Waterfront Promenade, instantly recognisable with their broad shoulders, thick forearms and, on closer inspection, broken fingernails. Sculptors assembling en masse is a rarity in the city; to see them gather in the West Kowloon Cultural District for our photo shoot is surprisingly moving.

Amid the gruelling debates surrounding the building of an arts district from scratch, rarely have the artists themselves been invited to the site. On March 12, this will all change. Fourteen local and international sculptors will take over the waterside grounds in the inaugural Hong Kong International Sculpture Symposium. The event will see the artists creating works in large white marquees, as the public watches and engages with the sculptors: a mini-arts festival taking over the serene, grass-covered site.

"This is really the way to get in touch with the public," says Victor Tai Sheung-shing, vice-president of the Hong Kong Sculpture Society. He has played a large role in organising the event, and believes that it will have a positive impact on the art form's perception. "The public understands a lot more about how sculptors work at these symposiums; we're creating art right in front of the public, from raw materials to the finished work."

The International Sculpture Symposium movement began in Austria in 1959, when sculptor Karl Prantl created an event in an abandoned stone quarry to provide networking opportunities for artists

working in 3D. Symposiums have since spread across the world, first appearing in Hong Kong in 2008. Victor Tai was already planning a symposium for the city when the locally-based Czech sculptor Emil Adamec beat him to it. "He jumped the queue," says Tai with a smile. "He made the largest sculpture ever handmade in Hong Kong."

Last April, Adamec organised a symposium in Tin Shui Wai Park with ten sculptors working in the open for 30 days, successfully engaging with the local community. Adamec is a captivating artist; for the past 12 years he has engaged in a worldwide

"We're creating art right in front of the public, from raw materials to the finished work"

sculpture project called *Acupuncture of the Earth*. He uses astrological charts to map out locations in more than 45 countries, taking inspiration from indigenous cultures to create enormous works that he says act like acupuncture needles to heal the planet. "I want to use the system of the stars and mirror it on the Earth, to make the Earth more happy and healthy," he explains.

The Hong Kong International Sculpture Symposium will be even bigger than Adamec's efforts, and co-organised by the Hong Kong Sculpture Society in partnership with the Arts Promotion Office of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. A group of international sculptors are invited,

including Zimbabwe's Tapiwa Chapo, Mani Kantasak from Thailand and Yang Xiaohua from Guangzhou. Of the five local sculptors, Zhang Ban will be making a plastic and metal work in the image of Chief Executive Donald Tsang, with a mailbox in the centre where audiences can post messages to Tsang. "Art should be asking questions and making people think," argues the artist. "Donald Tsang's government should be doing more for local artists."

Meanwhile, American sculptor Christopher Rothermel, the Sculpture Area Head at the Academy of Visual Arts at Hong Kong Baptist University, will be creating *Elysium* out of marble. "The work that I'm doing now embodies a way that's consistent with the nature of the material, not transforming it into a plastic state, with high polish and something that we don't recognise as the material anymore," he explains. "I'm looking at the natural properties, the visual language of the material."

In addition to the artists working on site, there will be an exhibition of works by local sculptors, as well as two talks at the Central Library about the role of public art in the city. Yet, the great potential of this event is the opportunity for the public to meet and interact with artists. "In many people's minds, especially in Hong Kong, people think these artists are really high up in the air; you cannot even see them never mind talk to them," says Tai. He adds that once audiences visit, they'll soon be back for more. "From my experience overseas, people will come back again and again to check on the progress of the sculpture," he says. Now that's how you go about building an organic arts scene.

Opens Thu 12. See listings for details.

Preview ArtWalk

Various venues Wednesday 11

ArtWalk returns to the city's streets on Wednesday 11, and it looks set to be as loud and entertaining as ever. The annual art event was a hit when it was first launched in 2001. The concept was simple: art galleries in Central, Soho, Sheung Wan, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay and Aberdeen open their doors late. Participants have to buy a ticket (\$420) with all proceeds donated to charity (this year they're going to the Society for Community Organization, a grassroots group which advocates for equal rights for all people). The ticket gets you a passport, which gains you access to all the galleries, and an abundance of complimentary wine.

The idea is for the public to check out some culture, but in reality it's not only about the art - ArtWalk is just as much a social event. "The stars of the night are the people, the participants," agrees organiser John Batten. While the art critic has pulled together an impressive 65 galleries this year, it's the extra events you'll want to look out for - performances and happenings scattered around the streets.

Culture Club on Elgin Street will be screening a comical video about the Complaints Choir concept currently taking over the world - and soon to launch in Hong Kong. "It is absolutely fantastic," raves Batten. Kwan Sheung-chi meanwhile has been chosen as ArtWalk's artist-in-residence. "It's a bit satirical, because everyone has to have an artist-in-residence at the moment," explains Batten with a laugh. "We're not quite sure what he'll do. He'll be wandering from gallery to gallery, doing whatever he likes." And believe, us, by about 10pm, when everyone's had a vast quantity of wine, it won't just be the artists doing strange things on the streets. *Clare Morin*
See listings for ticketing info.



People power Get arty with the masses