

Long Island City opens up for artists

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Sunhwa Chung and Ko-Ryo Dance Theater will perform as part of the Long Island City Arts Open. Photo courtesy of Kokyat

By Allison Plitt

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Once again the streets of Long Island City will buzz with the sights and sounds of Queens musicians, dancers, actors and artists in the fourth annual LIC Arts Open.

More than 250 creative types will take over 54 venues across the neighborhood, including 160 artists' open studios and 85 other planned events, during the five-day celebration beginning

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Musicians Duo RoMi will perform during the Queens New Festival, which is part of the LIC Arts Open.

Wednesday.

It started on a much smaller scale in 2011 when co-founders Karen Dimit, a sculptor, and Richard Mazda, artistic director of the Secret Theatre, decided to organize an art festival for their community.

“Richard and I felt like the studios needed more publicity, needed to get a wider audience, but Richard felt like the other arts – the theater and the music – also needed a platform,” Dimit said. “We wanted the artists to open up their studios, which always occurs during the weekend, but have a longer festival that also included performing arts.”

Although Dimit is not involved in the administrative aspects of the festival, she continues to play a part.

“I still am involved with helping place artists in alternative spaces that we are given for the festival time,” she said.

Because there is limited gallery space in Long Island City, many local businesses have volunteered to serve as venues for the artists such as Coffeed Lab & Rostery, the Dorian Cafe, The Local NYC Hotel as well as the Long Island City Academy of Music.

Some of the notable visual artists who will be displaying at the festival include photographer and World War II veteran Tony Vaccaro, emerging portraitist Stef Duffy and legendary sculptor Joel Shapiro. Visual artists throughout Long Island City will open their studios for visitors next weekend. BrickHouse Ceramic Art Center will be open for visitors to see sculptors work, observe demonstrations of wheel throwing and shop in the studio store.

To help the Queens Council on the Arts’ “High School to Art School” program, the festival will hold a fund-raiser. Over 100 artists will create original pieces for the festival with one thing in common – each will be confined to create artwork on a 10-inch-

by-10-inch wood panel to be unveiled at the "10 Squared" exhibition at the Gotham Center. The works will be sold at a silent charity auction during the closing party.

Next weekend the Queens New Music Festival gets under way with a three-day event featuring eight different acts which will all perform at the Secret Theatre. Face the Music, the only U.S. teen ensemble dedicated to the creation and performance of music by living composers, will kick off the music festival. Other performers include "Duo RoMi," a New York-based flute and piano ensemble dedicated to presenting innovative musical pieces that combine classical repertoire with contemporary works.

As for dance enthusiasts, Sunhwa and the Ko-Ryo Dance Theater, which blends modern and traditional Korean dance, will give two performances at Green Space Studio. Throughout the day next Saturday, the In-Sight Dance Company, a grassroots dance company based in Queens, will be giving performances of their newest ballet, "Pleading Against Prophecy," at multiple locations throughout the neighborhood such as at the historic Falchi Building, at Gantry Plaza State Park, and on Vernon Boulevard.

Drama buffs can soak up some culture opening night at the Museum of Modern Image with a retrospective exhibit about Jim Campbell, a filmmaker known for his low-resolution works.

The Secret Theater will be holding an improvisational workshop on Saturday afternoon. Also on Saturday, The NYC Local Hotel will be continuously screening the 2014 Queens World Film Festival called "The Best of the Festival Films."

When asked what she looks forward to this year, Dimit says she enjoys the celebrations of the different neighborhoods within Long Island City.

"The thing that is really fun is taking advantage of 'The Nabe Night Out,'" she said. "Wednesday night is 'Vernon Boulevard Nabe Night,' so there will be artwork and various performances occurring on Vernon Boulevard with the local restaurants fixing up food and drinks for the opening night of the festival. Thursday Night is 'Court Square Nabe Night' and Friday night is 'Queens Plaza Nabe Night.'"

There's a little something for everyone throughout Long Island City during its 2014 Arts Open.

For more information about the 2014 LIC Arts Open, you can visit the website www.licartsopen.org

If You Go

Long Island City Arts Open

When: Wednesday, May 14 to Sunday, May 18

Where: LIC

Website: www.licartsopen.org

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