



International Sculpture Day: Art, People, Parties, and Community Involvement

by Jan Garden Castro

The first International Sculpture Day—IS Day—was celebrated on April 24 at more than 54 locations in 12 countries around the world, including Hamilton, New Jersey; Brooklyn and Rye, New York; Houston, Texas; Miami, Florida; and Des Moines, Iowa; as well as sites in California, Austria, Australia, Canada, China, England, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Switzerland. Johannah Hutchison, Executive Director of the International Sculpture Center, explained the rationale behind the event: “Part of the ISC mission is to expand public understanding and appreciation of sculpture internationally. Creating, or choosing, a day to celebrate sculpture on a global level was a way to start the dialogue on an international level and to bring attention to the

art form...with the idea of being inclusive, allowing anyone to participate. Organizations are encouraged to open their doors and host free events, artists to open their studios, galleries to host a reception or have an artist speak, and anything goes. If it brings attention to sculpture, we welcome it and support it.”¹

Several events were held in the greater New York area. About 300 people participated in the IS Day TASK Party sponsored by the ISC in Hamilton, New Jersey (more on that at the end). Bob Clyatt’s open studio in Rye, New York, was on the front page of the *Rye Record*. A staff of four, with support from the Rye Arts Center, hosted 110 visitors from Westchester and other counties. Clyatt demonstrated how to make a plaster

box mold of a head and the lost wax bronze casting process. He set up blank clay heads on armatures and about a dozen people picked up tools to sculpt from a live model. Clyatt also discussed his finished works, as well as his ceramic endeavors, including raku glazing and firing.

Janet Van Fleet’s IS Day open studio in Barre, Vermont, was also covered in the press (by *Hardwick Gazette* reporter Will Walters). Visitors viewed her constructions of wood, metal, found objects, and welded disk structures and ate carrots from her home garden. Chakaia Booker and Steven Shalowitz, who hosts the *One Way Ticket Show* podcast, visited ISC Board member Boaz Vaadia’s open studio in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, for IS Day. Around 100 visitors engaged in conversation with

IS Day TASK Party at Grounds For Sculpture.

the artist as he demonstrated his methods of carving stone. Vaadia also showed videos illustrating his techniques.

In Manhattan, Myth Makers Donna Dodson and Andy Moerlein, creators of the “Avian Avatars” sculptures sited on Broadway, hosted two evening tours. Visitors from New York and beyond joined a great discussion of Dodson and Moerlein’s monumental sapling sculptures. This was the closing event for the “Avian Avatars,” which were loaded into a truck early the next morning en route to a year-long installation at the Muskegon Museum of Art.

In Iowa, Jeff Fleming, Director of the Des Moines Art Center, reported, “We conducted docent



tours of our Pappajohn Sculpture Park and provided lunch sandwiches for participants. It was a great day to celebrate public art in Des Moines and the many contributions it makes to the vitality of the Des Moines community.” The Krasl Art Center hosted two events in Benton Harbor and Saint Joseph, Michigan, according to its Guest Services Manager Jackie Kenyon. The first was the premier of an ongoing summer scavenger hunt. Visitors were given clues, history lessons, and selfie photo opportunities as they hunted among 50 outdoor sculptures in Saint Joseph. For the second event, about 45 participants visited the Heidelberg Project in Detroit and spoke with its founder/creator Tyree Guyton. The HP is an open-air art environment in the heart of an urban community. Its mission focuses on community redevelopment and self-sustainability, from the inside out, by embracing the neighborhood’s diverse cultures and artistic attributes as the essential building blocks for a fulfilling and economically viable way of life. The HP has

become a model project for community engagement and transformation through the arts.

The Sarasota Sculpture Center in Florida hosted “Remembering John Chamberlain,” organized by Susan L. McLeod and Duncan Chamberlain, with works by both father and son. This outdoor event, held at Duncan Chamberlain’s huge studio, was featured in the April 24 weekend edition of the *Sarasota Herald Tribune*. Over 300 guests enjoyed refreshments and live music as part of this large-scale exhibition. In Greensboro, North Carolina, the Weatherspoon Art Museum at the University of North Carolina held self-guided tours of its sculpture garden.

Palm Springs Air Museum curator Stephen Zapantis relayed that Steve Maloney debuted his transformed 47-foot UH-1 Huey helicopter (inside a large tent) for over 200 visitors, including veterans, art collectors, museum visitors, and a class of second-graders on a field trip. The helicopter, which served as an air ambulance in the Vietnam War, was shot down on February 14, 1969. Jeanie Cunningham per-

formed an original song that she wrote for the occasion, and Maloney gave a talk and discussed his work-in-progress—the “Take Me Home Huey Project,” which will travel to U.S. museums over the next three years to honor Vietnam Veterans and raise awareness for PTSD.

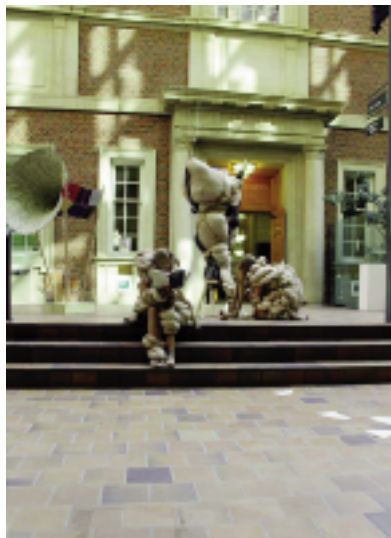
Over 900 people visited Charles Stinson’s open studio in San Francisco. His exhibition “Bamboo” featured 19 works influenced by bamboo, including three bronzes. Stinson also sponsored a silent auction to benefit San Francisco’s ArtSpan, Pacific Rim Sculptors, and the ISC. The *Pacific Rim Sculptors (PRS) Newsletter* reported that several PRS members spent the evening in an outburst of creativity at Oakland’s Studio One. The assignment: two-person teams had to construct found-object sculptures in 15 minutes. As Eileen Fitz-Faulkner said, “The 15-minute time restriction made for some spontaneous creations that took me out of my planning head and into my hands. Refreshing!”

In Canada, sculptor Royden Mills gave strong evidence that

Left: Bob Clyatt’s open studio in Rye, New York. Above: Visitors at the Heidelberg Project in Detroit with founder/creator Tyree Guyton.

“the Art and Design Department at the University of Alberta is the life force of the community in Edmonton.” The department’s experimental sculpture exhibition and artist talks attracted about 100 participants and produced lively, articulate discussions and live music. In Sainte Agathe des Monts in Québec, Vincent Champion-Ercoli and 34 visitors celebrated IS Day.

In Lot et Garonne, France, the Association of Friends of the Museum of Gertrude Schoen launched a campaign to generate support for Schoen’s sculpture museum, according to Peter Hibbard. Okay Ikenegbu, reporting from the School of Art, Design and Printing Technology, Institute of Management and Technology in Enugu, Nigeria, sent images of students, faculty, and guests celebrating IS Day as Ikenegbu shared slides from the ISC conferences that he attended in 2013 and



Left: 3 views of IS Day celebrations in Enugu, Nigeria. Above: Experimental sculpture exhibition at the University of Alberta. Right, top and bottom: IS Day TASK Party at Grounds For Sculpture.



2014. In Langwarrin, Australia (near Melbourne), the McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery launched a month-long Instagram sculpture hunt in collaboration with the Hotel Windsor, which awards an annual art prize and scholarship. At Loughborough University in Leicestershire, U.K., John Atkin's students held an exhibition, "Touching Distance."

The ISC TASK Party was the brainchild of Oliver Herring, who has held Task Parties worldwide, from the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC, to locations in New York, Texas, China, and Japan.² The assignment is straightforward: write tasks and perform tasks. Most involve humorous, interactive experiences that help build bridges between people of all ages and life experiences. When I arrived, volunteers and staff, many in purple ISC t-shirts, were organizing diverse art sup-

plies and recycled materials they had collected. All floors and most walls were covered with rolls of paper to form an all-white space for painting and drawing. Grade-schoolers had painted giant letters colorfully spelling out TASK for the entrance and two inside locations. Boxes to hold New Tasks and Completed Tasks stood ready to be filled.

The party got off to a great start as DJ Lee Tusman began to mix his beats with a range of electronic, dance, and African music. Colorful tasks included turning into a tree, dancing in a conga line, becoming a robot, and shouting secrets from a microphone. Participants converged from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York. Children role-played in the pillow room, while students in the paint room gave the walls a wild, abstract look. Many people created masks and cos-

tumes. A large spider web, a tall fort with a gold-foil foot on top, and a silver unicorn all came to life. People of all ages and sizes sported painted, glitter-streaked faces, air guitars, dragon mascots, and wings. Physical transformations often involved liberating interactions with others. The point of the evening was everywhere: joy, sharing, and the birth of new possibilities. As Hutchison summed it up: "I wanted the inaugural ISC Event for IS day to be a celebratory event that would involve community, rather than focusing on any one sculptor, sculpture, or sculpture park. I wanted it to be fun, to be an art-making experience, and to have a level of creative freedom that would allow everyone to enjoy and celebrate sculpture...Oliver straight away...was very excited about the idea of the ISC's inaugural event for IS Day being a

TASK party, and he said yes. It was a mammoth undertaking, but absolutely an incredible experience."

All IS Day programs demonstrated this same spirit of engagement, of welcoming participants of all ages and cultures, and of using art to foster community-building through teamwork, problem-solving, and generating new ways of thinking. As "Avian Avatar" co-creator Andy Moerlein put it, "It was a spirited opportunity to connect with the wider world of sculpture."

Notes

¹ All quotations come from e-mails to the author and ISC staff.

² For more information, visit <<http://blog.sculpture.org/2015/06/03/oliver-herrings-task-parties/#more-5779>> and <<http://oliverherringstudio.com>>.