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## Art + Body: The Possible, Improbable and Everything In Between

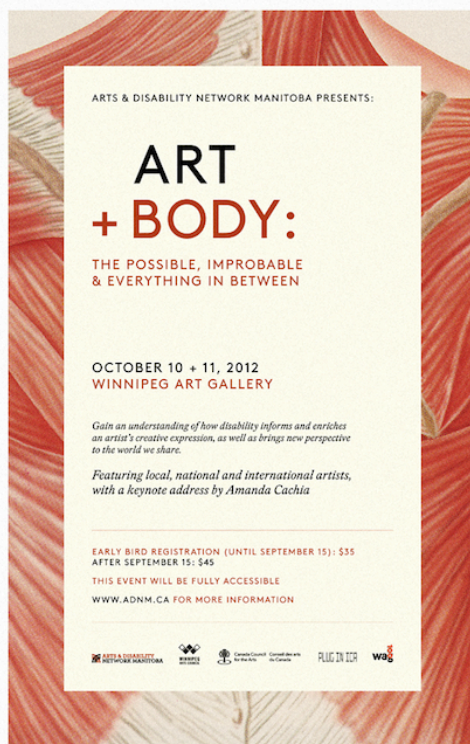
By Harry Paine on November 25, 2012

Posted in Arts & Entertainment Charitable Organizations Culture Philanthropy Reviews

As a social activist in a number of different areas I find myself attending educational forums, conferences and broad networking meetings of all kinds but the Art + Body Fair presented by the Arts and Disability Network of Manitoba (ADNM) October 10 – 11 was certainly the high point of those that I have attended this year.

Thanks has go to those who had the vision and foresight to put together this fair that was a display of artistic achievement, strongly educational and inspiring all at the same time. It was unfortunate that the Winnipeg Art Gallery auditorium was not as packed as it should be but I am sure there are a lot of artistic persons who would kick themselves if they knew what they had missed; for this participant it was a learning curve of immense proportions.

What made it so great? The first evening gave some indication of what was to come with the greetings from the City of Winnipeg by Councillor Ross Eadie who could easily make a living as a stand-up comic if he gives up politics. A performance piece by Debbie Patterson certainly lived up to the brilliance that those of us around the local cultural scene have come to expect from this most talented artist.



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### PHOTO OF THE DAY



On the bandwagon: a sign of the times at a local donut shop. No word yet on official bagels or perogies. PHOTO by Greg Petzold

Submit your Photo here!

Check out our Photo of the Day Gallery!

### RIVER CITY 360



The keynote speaker for the evening was Amanda Cachia whose list of accomplishments goes far beyond anything that could be included in this review but is worth anyone's time to visit with her on the various websites that feature her curating and academic listings. Her address focussed around the theme of *What Can a Body Do?* That forms the basis of an exhibition now being curated by Cachia and being hosted by Haverford College in Pennsylvania.

To whet your appetite I would quote from the program of the Fair: "Cachia has curated approximately 30 exhibitions over ten years in London, New York, Oakland and various cities across Australia and Canada. Her curatorial practice revolves around interdisciplinary themes within a social justice framework. Cachia has been the Chair of the Dwarf Artists Coalition for the Little People of America since 2007." If you are looking for inspiration use your favourite search engine to check out this incredible woman and her accomplishments.

Geoff McMurchy is always a welcome visitor to the gathering of artists with special needs because of the inspiration he generates when describing the highly successful work being done with his leadership in British Columbia through the Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture that presents original dance, visual art exhibits, music, theatre and their signature event, the Kickstart Festival in Victoria and Vancouver.



Geoff is the epitome of inspiration, overcoming the extreme hardship of being in a car accident that left him with a broken neck just as he was preparing to enter his studies in the art of print-making. His role as an advocate for persons with disabilities led him to organizations of community art and eventually a long-standing involvement of his own, striving to empower artists and performers with disabilities. He understands that the most important thing in life is to give of one's talent and skill for the betterment of the community no matter what are your limitations.

Local contributors included Ted Howorth, a renowned artist who treated us to a photographic tour of recently visited European print-shop facilities; Tara Davis, boutique owner and contributor to the work of Artbeat Studio assisting the cause of mental health resources through the development of artistic talent.

Small in number but huge in impact was the juried art displayed in a room off the main entrance. Any future events of this kind presented by ADNMM would do well to expand similar presentations. The power of the show was that it contained the works of seasoned artists such as Daphne Enns to submissions by students from Artbeat Studio such as Marie LeBlanc.

Music and performance art was an important part of the Fair and the audience could not help but be overwhelmed by the talented artists who presented themselves. Especially significant was the Deaf Mime Troupe of actors who in the vernacular of theatre really "knocked 'em dead". Blues was on the menu with award winning artists Hillbilly Burlesque Trio and the powerhouse singer Kathy Kennedy.

Andrea von Wichert, a Winnipeg multi-disciplinary award-winning writer and performer presented a one-woman show that left everyone wondering how a relatively small city such as ours could have so much talent. Big Daddy Tazz acted as MC throughout the Fair and added further to our wonderment. The fun stuff and the great snacks provided between sets alone were more than worthy of the price of admission. Yea! Kudos to everyone involved in the organization.



Listen to audio stories from **River City 360**, a project of The Winnipeg Foundation, in partnership with Community News Commons and 93.7 CJNU-FM.

## LOCAL HEROES



### Impressed by generosity of volunteers, entrepreneur gives back

By Marney Blunt on May 4, 2015

Seeing the energy each volunteer put into every aspect of the organization is what inspired Danny's Whole Hog to donate to Siloam Mission volunteers.

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Know someone who is a local hero? Tell their story and we'll feature it here.

## CNC CITIZEN REPORTERS



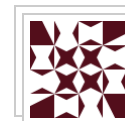
### VMC YIP

Young philanthropists get behind-the-scenes look at local charities



### Jean Borbridge

The heart of a neighbourhood



### Ian Wassink

New Community Bicycle Shop project launches in Portage



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The second day of the Fair actually began with a short presentation by Ross Eadie that for me summarized the overall theme of the Fair. I have known Councillor Eadie for quite a lot of years in many capacities and especially as a person who, when any disenfranchised people were fighting for their rights, he was more than likely there as one of their spokespersons.

Aside from the fact that he had his audience in a constant state of laughter with his comical repartee the thing that I did not know about Ross Eadie was that he had a keen interest in art. For the general population and even for artists the idea of someone who is blind appreciating and being a skilled critic of art may not only be strange but maybe not to be taken too seriously. Eadie's presentation belied that idea and here it seemed for me he brought clarity to the whole reason for the *Art + Body: The Possible, Improbable & Everything In Between* as a theme for an exhibition and the Fair was given life.

The Arts & Disability Network of Manitoba is not only an organization to assist artists and advocate for their special needs but it is also an organization that promotes the special and unique art form that this group of professionals has to offer the world of artistic and cultural expression and appreciation.

Many artists with a limited ability are reluctant to associate with other artists who are disabled in case they are judged not for their artistic skill but out of some misplaced empathy. However inspiration for great art is surely social isn't it? That which inspires us as artists and writers is how we fit in society and how society interacts with us. Our disability cannot help but influence both; our 'disability' is us and we are our 'disability', it is who and what we are as artists.

**ADNM enables us who recognize that our abilities may be limited to some extent by systemic attitudes and also provides opportunity for us to come together, share our experience and inspire one another. The level of how civilized is a society can be measured by the degree to which we enable artistic expression.**

Defining disability is often a debate that we have amongst ourselves. It is not always as apparent as it would seem. What makes a person painting from a wheel-chair different from a person sitting on a stool at an easel? The number of artists with some form of disability either mental or physical is enormous and while we may judge them for their skill we cannot avoid the fact that their disability was at least partially if not a primary contribution to that skill.

And what of the influences outside of our physical bodies? Does not the infrastructure, traditions, religion and existing culture of society contribute to our 'madness' as artists?



I have a particular interest in early twentieth century Mexican writers and muralist painters such as Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo and Jose Orozco, who were inspired by the social turmoil of revolution, colonialism and the 'disability' that came from suppression by an oppressive regime. The uniqueness of their art form emerged from that 'disability'. While all artists have a unique creativity they invariably fit into a school of some kind that is influenced by social conditions. Disability is such a school and a growing one at that.

For me this school of art is exciting and in many ways revolutionary. The Arts and Disability Network of Manitoba by presenting this Fair put these artists front and centre in a world that is looking for new things that are positive expressions of human creativity; I can't wait for the next presentation, fair or exhibition coming from ADNM.

Tweet



**About Harry Paine**

Advocate looking to find others willing to live by their principles and wanting to change the world in a way that will make it more equitable for all. I am a writer, organizer and keep my mind open for any new ideas that make sense.

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