

BIZBASH

September 28, 2010

http://www.bizbash.com/newyork/content/editorial/19183_real_estate_firm_develops_dumbo_festival_into_multidisciplinary_family-friendly_fair.php

Real Estate Firm Develops Dumbo Festival Into Multidisciplinary, Family-Friendly Fair

Back in 1997, the art community in Dumbo started an ambitious weekend fair known as the Art Under the Bridge Festival, an annual event organized by the Dumbo Arts Center until last year. For this year's iteration, neighborhood real estate company and sponsor Two Trees Management took on a more active role, renaming it the Dumbo Arts Festival, producing and expanding the range of programming, and bringing in event company [Dalzell Productions](#) to help run and manage the project. After kicking off Friday, the Brooklyn neighborhood's event ran through Sunday and also introduced family-friendly activities and entertainment, as well as a digital summit alongside events and installations for visual art, performance, literary, and music artists.

"We took over not just the production, but the programming. We took over the whole festival, so artistically, programmatically, production-wise, the whole festival was under new leadership," said Zannah Mass, the cultural affairs director for Two Trees, explaining that the firm decided to take the reins "when it became clear that the festival needed people in the driver's seat." That choice was made in late February, and planning got under way in April, giving Two Trees and Dalzell less than six months to raise funds, organize the selection of events, and pull it off.



Held Friday through Sunday, the Dumbo Arts Festival offered an array of indoor and outdoor exhibitions, installations, activities, and events. Among these was Jennifer Zakin's "Aftershock" piece, set on the waterfront of Brooklyn Bridge Park

PHOTO GALLERY



DUMBO ARTS FESTIVAL

PR Rubenstein Associates Inc.
Production Dalzell Productions
Sound One Dream Sound

For Karen Dalzell, who has produced the Tribeca Film Festival and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation's Kids for Kids Family Carnival, previous experience informed the planning process. "After seven years of doing all the Tribeca Film Festival special events, large public outdoor spectacles and indoor spectacles are second nature to us. Plus, working on Kids for Kids helped—I have my own kids, and Dumbo is no longer a hipster neighborhood. I thought we'd better support that community, so that they felt involved," she explained.

In fact, the events, activities, and performances geared toward families, such as painting and pop-up-book making at the Art Garage, morning yoga sessions hosted by Yogi Beans in the Tobacco Warehouse, and music workshops, were partly a way to draw a wider audience, which was a goal for Two Trees. "We definitely wanted it to be accessible, there's no doubt about that. We wanted it to be high-quality, too, and it's a delicate balance," said Mass, adding that organizers also hoped to boost the local economy.

What played a large role in the quality was an advisory board of several subcommittees, which curated the programming by discipline. For example, Marc Dennis, a painter, professor at Elmira College, and self-described bug chef, chaired the visual art committee, helping to broaden the selection of participants, while composer and performer Patrick Derivaz headed the music committee, bringing in musicians from an array of genres to play indoors and out.

"There was always some performance art, but there was just a bit more this year. There were always visual arts and the open studios, and there were always art installations inside and outside, but they weren't necessarily juried in the same way, nor did they have prizes," said Mass. There was also, for the first time, a digital summit, which the team from Dalzell introduced as a way to acknowledge and encourage participation from the burgeoning number of technology companies in the area.

With more than 700 participating artists representing more than 40 different countries, 80-plus music groups and instrument makers, the involvement of more than 50 venues, and aid of some 250 volunteers, the Dumbo Arts Festival is seen as a success. "People see the potential of the festival. They wanted to talk about it, they saw that it was going to grow, and they were really excited about being a part of it," said Dalzell of the sponsors. Mass agreed and said the number of attendees was more than 150,000. And plans are already under way for next year's festival.

—Anna Sekula