

CAPITALIZING ON CULTURE

Culture Days celebrates art and culture by inviting the public to engage in an industry that is not only creative and fun, but that – more and more – is driving the economy

Artists, musicians, designers and other creative types play an integral role in the economy, according to a report that examines the relationship between culture, economy and space in the city of Toronto. *From the Ground Up: Growing Toronto's Cultural Sector*, published last year, reports that cultural industries contribute \$9 billion to Toronto's gross domestic product and account for 5 per cent of the region's work force. And, between 1991 and 2009, Toronto's creative industries grew by 2.9 per cent – surpassing growth in other leading sectors, including financial services.

Nancy Bodi, executive director of the York Region Arts Council and a faculty member at Seneca College's School of Media and Marketing in Markham, says planners are starting to pay attention. Most of York Region's nine municipalities have begun to see cultural planning as a strategic "cornerstone," says Bodi. Vibrant communities that place a high value on art and culture typically attract business investment, she says. "It all adds up to economic development."

But it is not only the economy that benefits from art and culture.

Culture Days, a collaborative, nationwide event, invites people to participate hands-on in the world of art, architecture, design and other creative disciplines in an effort to show the value inherent in the cultural life.

Now in its third year, Culture Days, held annually during the last weekend of September, showcases everything from design, theatre and culinary arts to dance, music and new media.

While some of the family-friendly activities are presented by large professional organizations, such as the Canadian Opera Company, others are hosted by smaller organizations, multicultural groups and individual artists.

Last year more than 700 Canadian cities and towns celebrated Culture Days, with some 6,000 free activities offered to the public. The event receives support from the private sector including Sun Life, Endeavour, The J.W. McConnell Family



Toronto composer Rick Sacks keeps the Culture Days beat by opening his studio to the public for a percussion workshop. "It's about having fun – discovering a wonderful set of sounds," he says.

Foundation, as well as from the Government of Toronto, the Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Trillium Foundation and Canadian Heritage, among others.

What sets Culture Days apart from other arts events, such as Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, is its focus on experiencing the creative process – rather than on the finished product. Participants of all ages have the chance to immerse themselves in a new or familiar discipline for a few hours or to go behind the scenes with artists, historians, curators, dancers, designers and others who volunteer their time.

Rick Sacks, an artistic director of Toronto's Arraymusic and a professional percussionist and composer, leads a percussion

workshop that lets people experiment with instruments such as the keyboard, marimba, xylophone, glockenspiel, tom-tom, bongo drums and even circular saw blades and big bolts. "It's about having fun – discovering a wonderful set of sounds," says Sacks. "We create something that has never been created before." Sacks typically records each musical improvisation so participants can later listen to it online.

Culture Days is also about building an audience one person at a time, says Sacks. His young participants not only see how adults earn a living making music, but they also "might grow up to be audience members, musicians or hopefully benefactors, philanthropists."

Plan your weekend



With more than 500 free activities taking place in the GTA during Culture Days, it pays to plan ahead. Here are seven events to get you started:

1. Rehearsal of Canadian Opera Company's *Die Fledermaus*

Catch a glimpse of this operetta of mistaken identity and glamorous parties and join CBC's Brent Bambury for a pre-rehearsal chat with creative team members. Friday, Toronto

2. Hands-on filmmaking

Create short videos by working with clowns! You'll also learn about pictorial continuity and composition and how to think like an editor. Saturday, Toronto

3. Korean dance and drum workshop

Explore how Korean dance places a strong emphasis on mood, ecstasy and joy. Saturday, Toronto

4. Behind-the-scenes tour at Oshawa Little Theatre

Discover how live theatre productions are created and produced. Saturday, Oshawa

5. Comic book character workshop for youth

Learn to create comic book characters from concept to completion. Sunday, Oshawa

6. PARK(ing) in Port Credit

Four artists transform parking spaces into innovative works of art. Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Mississauga

7. "Gossip Town" – create a play-in-a-day challenge

A series of progressive workshops in scriptwriting, song writing, set design and choreography will help you co-create and perform a play. Saturday and Sunday, Georgina, Ont.

For locations, times and other useful information, such as registration details, go to culturaldays.ca. Create a personalized schedule of activities in your community by using the Bright Spots Schedule at culturaldays.ca/en/my-culture-days.

PHOTO: THOMAS BOLLMANN

I ♥ CULTURE

500 FREE activities across the GTA!
Take part in hands-on and behind-the-scenes activities in Toronto, Durham, Halton, Peel and York Regions.

culturaldays

CREATE, PARTICIPATE & CELEBRATE

Sun Life Financial

SEPT 28, 29, 30 2012

3 DAYS, 7000 EXPERIENCES

CULTUREDAYS.CA



Founding Visionary Partner

Visionary Partner

National Broadcast Partner

Ontario Newspaper Partner

Provincial Partners

