



B| 834-9350

The Brooklyn Papers' essential guide to the Borough of Kings



# Last of its kind?

## DUMBO arts festival's 10th year puts focus on visual art

By Sasha Vasilyuk  
for The Brooklyn Papers

Over the past decade, thousands of visitors have come to DUMBO's annual "art under the bridge festival" each October to see the latest from this burgeoning artistic enclave. Now in its 10th year, the festival, held by the d.u.m.b.o. arts center Oct. 13-15, redefines itself by focusing on what has always made it unique — visual art.

Under the management of new Executive Director Breda Kennedy, the festival will drop most of its music performers in favor of new experimental visual art programs, which explore all mediums from painting to video to graffiti.

"There is music year-round in New York," says d.u.m.b.o. arts center Associate Director Chris Herbeck. "What makes this festival unique is that it's visual art-based."

When local artist Joy Glidden launched this festival in 1997, she used bands to attract crowds to then little-known DUMBO. But now the festival has become a local tradition that brings over 200,000 visitors and launches the careers of many artists.

Over the years, the DUMBO festival introduced the likes of Swoon, a graffiti artist whose woodblock prints and cutouts are displayed all over New York and have just been exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art; and Theatre OUP, which made a splash at last year's fest with its interactive comic performances that have since spread throughout the boroughs. Both Swoon and Theatre OUP

will honor their roots by returning to perform at this 10th annual event.

"Artists are very inspired by this neighborhood," says Kennedy, who has been working in the international art world for over 20 years. "For most of them, this is their first opportunity to embark on a project like this. That's what's great about it. I don't know anything comparable in the U.S."

The festival has nurtured the local art scene and put the neighborhood on New York's cultural map. But everyone knows that where the artists go, developers follow, and DUMBO may soon be crowded with suits and towering buildings.

Despite the fear of gentrification, Kennedy is sure that the festival will go on.

"The festival will continue no matter what, because it's got such support in the community," she says. "It would be like taking away Christmas. But whether we will have so many open studios of fine artists in years to come, I'm not sure. What will probably happen is that you will have more commercial artists, designers, graphic designers, architects who can afford studios here. That profile will change within a few years."

Many have already felt the changes. To mourn the changing climate of the area, one local artist, Daniel Sterling, is organizing "Death



Artists on the move: The "dumbo art under the bridge festival" Pink Ladies Cruise Team of Theatre OUP (top left) Oct. 13-15, from 7 Fulton Ferry Landing and Agata Oleksiak's "sculptural installation," "1100 Percent Acrylic" (top right), on Oct. 14 at 4:30 pm at D.U.M.B.O. arts center's new executive director, Breda Kennedy (inset)

of DUMBO," a funeral march and musical performance by DUMBO-only bands.

"It's a cathartic moment," says Sterling, whose friends have already been forced out of DUMBO by increased rents. "With the new millionaires moving in, all the struggling artists — and even successful artists — cannot afford to stay here. [The funeral march] is to remember the people that were here."

"Death of DUMBO" may be the only scheduled musical event in this year's visual art extravaganza, but it doesn't mean that other artistic disciplines are excluded.

For example, contemporary dance performances, organized by White Wave as part of the 2006 DUMBO Dance Festival, will entertain the audience in the Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park. There, 11 New York dance artists and companies will present works ranging from the acrobatic to theatrical to poetic.

This year's festival also reflects change in the area of filmmaking. While the program

previously included both videos at film, this year's "Video\_DUMBO" focuses exclusively on videos. Local presenting previously unscreened and experimental and documentary work joined by international video-makers Reinert, Mexico City and Seoul. Art will also get a chance to see archival from all the previous festivals.

But, as Kennedy pointed out, the draw of the festival is experimental video. As in previous years, DUMBO will be with intriguing artworks shown in lofts on facades, rooftops, sidewalks and the water.

Unique site-specific installations ranging to the neighborhood's unusual spaces especially work a look. For example, Research Lab is combining traditional technology by temporarily projecting onto a wall.

On a loading dock, Las Vegas artist Sheppard is displaying "Lost in Spegas," a disciplinary installation with an apocalyptic Vegas theme. Kennedy calls Sheppard "one of the wilder ones."

Gallery exhibits and artists' open have always been a draw for the crowds. But this year, there is the Triangle Arts Association. Once every year, this art organization, which has DUMBO since their move from the Trade Center after 9-11, invites artists over the world to participate in an art two-week workshop that culminates in a day exhibit. To attract a wider audience year's 30,000 square-foot exhibit, it is held to coincide with the festival.

"We want to be more part of this city," says Ann Chen, Triangle's executive. "I am looking forward to seeing peo-

### Festival highlights

**Video\_DUMBO:** See experimental and documentary videos, new video art from New York and international artists, and archival footage from past festivals. Event days and times: Oct. 13, from 9 pm to 2 am; Oct. 14, from 2:30 pm to 2 am; and Oct. 15, from 2:30 pm to 9 pm. Location: 16 Main St. at Water Street. Admission: \$5.

**Theatre OUP!** Pink Ladies Cruise Team of Theatre OUP presents comedic, participatory performance, "PLOUR! A Dive in the Hudson." Event days and times: Oct. 13-15, from 7 pm to 9 pm. The last boat leaves at 8:30 pm. Location: New York Water Taxi, departing every half hour from Fulton Ferry Landing. Admission: free. For more information, call (212) 502-8574 or visit the Web site, www.theatreoup.org.

**Death of DUMBO:** Join the funeral march and enjoy the festival's only musical entertainment presented by DUMBO bands. Event date: Oct. 14, from 1 pm to 10 pm; rain date is Oct. 15. Location: the Triangle, 155 Water St. at Adams Street. Admission: free.

**DUMBO Dance Festival:** Marvel at the contemporary dance performances in the unique outdoor setting. Event date: Oct. 15, from 1 pm to 3 pm. Location: Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park at Water and New Dock streets. In case of rain, performances will be held at White Wave's John Ryan Theater, 25 Jay St. at Plymouth Street. Admission: free. For more information, call (718) 855-8822 or visit the Web site www.whitewavearts.com.

**Lost in Spegas:** Don't forget to visit this wild, Vegas-themed installation by Las Vegas artist, Aaron Sheppard. Event dates: Oct. 14-15. Location: at the loading dock, 45 Main St. at Front Street. Admission: free.

**Open Studio of the Triangle Artists' Workshops:** Do not miss the one-day-only culmination of the workshop for artists from all over the world. Event date: Oct. 14, from 1 pm to 6 pm. Location: on the ground floor of 20 Jay St. at Plymouth Street. Admission: free. For more information, call (718) 858-1260 or visit the Web site www.triangleworkshop.org.

"Dumbo art under the bridge festival" brochures, with a complete listing of events and a map, can be picked up at the d.u.m.b.o. arts center, 30 Washington St. at Water Street in DUMBO. Call for the center's hours at (718) 894-0831.