

Printed on page E32

THE ARTS

Gallery tackles public art

By *NICHOLE L. REBER*
CORRESPONDENT

Published: Friday, December 9, 2005 at 3:32 a.m.

Dressed as Batman, Chris Bohatyritz jumps out of a van at a Shell gas station on the corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and North Tamiami Trail and plugs his electric guitar into an amplifier.

David Curran, also costumed, climbs behind a set of drums inside the van. Together, they form the band known as Mount Awesome, and they seemingly spontaneously rock out for a single song, entertaining passers-by and customers.

Children whose mother is fueling up get out of the family SUV to dance. College students gather and film the event. A clerk working at the gas station stands on a curb to listen.

And within minutes, Mount Awesome finishes their song, hurriedly packs up and drives away with a wave to the crowd.

The above scene was one of many unfolding around Sarasota recently as part of the Mack B Gallery's opening exhibition, "What Is Public Art?" The gallery, which opened in October, will close its exhibition tonight with a panel discussion of artists encouraging the embrace of public art.

"We've got a lot of public art around Sarasota, and this is just questioning different schools of thought (about it)," said Toby Albright, curator for Mack B and a theatrical artist who conducts public performances.

Bohatyritz is a sales representative for the gallery. "It's all about spontaneity. It's working as an obstruction of space," he said, adding that his band will independently continue to offer spontaneous performances after the exhibition closes.

Doug Loewen, an art instructor and Sarasota resident, has followed a guide put out by the gallery to view some of the recent performances.

"The most fun aspect is seeing them drive away. You know you just saw something good, and then it's gone," he said. "It's temporary, but I'll remember it much like an object somewhere else."

Giant sculptures currently on display along Sarasota's Bayfront Park and fiberglass clowns proposed for display around town, both controversial to the Sarasota arts community, are "just a fraction" of what public art really is, said Margaret Barnes, owner of Mack B.

While the gallery permanently features conventional art forms such as paintings, sculpture and furniture, it will continue to offer random performances and public video exhibitions in the future.

The performances are an extension of Barnes' and Albright's hopes to encourage dialogue about public art.

"We hope people will use (the panel discussion) as an opportunity to share their opinions about what's happening in Sarasota right now," Albright said.

This story appeared in print on page E32

Copyright © 2013 HeraldTribune.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.