

The Patriot Ledger

HUBWeek festival brings 4 days of arts, science and technology to Boston

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There are no stages, tents or galleries in this arts festival, but plenty of shipping containers and geodesic domes that beckon people to enter.

“We’re not a traditional art venue,” said Leonie Bradbury, director of art and creative initiatives for HUBWeek, a six-day festival of technology, science and the arts in Boston. “We create experiences where people are engaging with the arts. Most of the projects are new and were made for this location.”

There’s an Enchanted Forest, a Neon Dream, music and dance parties, and improvisational dancers and musicians responding to the contours of the plaza.

Called Immersion, HUBWeek’s arts component for the first time has a prominent role, as well as a central location at City Hall Plaza – renamed the HUB. The central location should make the 3-year-old HUBWeek more accessible and recognized. About 20,000 people attended last year.

“We’re a young festival and a lot of people don’t know what we are,” Bradbury said. “The HUB should change that.”

The arts programming runs Oct. 12-15, although HUBWeek begins its sessions with leading thinkers, entrepreneurs and scientists on Oct. 10 both on the Plaza and at various locations in Boston and Cambridge.

“This year, there’s way more emphasis on the arts than ever before,” Bradbury said. “HUBWeek’s niche is to try to cross disciplines, and one of the things underlying everything is creativity.”

Many of the offerings are collaborations among artists and performers with different orientations. The 35 shipping containers house installations, and the four geodesic domes become music and dance venues Thursday to Saturday evenings after the presentations and discussions finish. There also will be performances directly on the plaza and children’s activities.

“We have these environments where people can walk into a completely different world,” Bradbury said. “The boundaries (between disciplines) are blurred. I’m expecting people to say, ‘I don’t really know what to call it, but it’s very cool.’”

In “Go to the Light: Neon Dream,” three screen printers have transformed an 8-by-20 foot shipping container where everything glows.

“People are put into this almost psychedelic, surrealist environment,” said Morgan Grenier of Trifecta Editions. “A unique part of florescent and black lights is the way they interact with your eyes. It can’t be captured by a camera. It has to be experienced in person.”

At the entrance, people will walk through something that resembles a 3-D paper jungle, then into a living room cave with a fireplace and mirrors and out through a geode.

“We want to highlight the wonder and imagination we see around us,” said Grenier, who collaborated with Helen Popinchalk of Trifecta Editions, and Jay LaCouture of AntiDesigns.

In the tree-lined promenade on the north side of the plaza, another collaborative group has created an interactive "Enchanted Forest." As people walk between dozens of trees, they can manipulate elements to change surrounding colors, lights, sounds and shapes. While details are not final, the designers expect to create birds that light up and glow, and whistles that mimic bird calls.

"It's a wonderful grove of trees that is kind of a hidden gem," said co-designer Fish McGill. "It's a peaceful place for people to have some experiences that transport them and that raise their awareness of the natural world."

McGill, a visual artist, is collaborating with Andrew Ringler and Saul Baizler, programmers of interactive design, all of whom teach at Mass College of Art.

In the "Aura" shipping container filled with Philips LED lights, people become composers as their movements affect the pace and pitch of sound.

There also will be a variety of performances around the domes and shipping containers. Musician and composer Ben Cosgrove will play improvisational piano works inspired by the setting. Choreographer and dancer Sarah Slifer Swift, along with three other dancers, will perform Liminal Activations, improvised works that respond to the stairs, brick patterns and other architectural features of City Hall Plaza.

"We playfully entice people to open their minds," said Swift, director of Meek Productions in Gloucester. "When people see dancers on stage, they tend to want a story told. But when they see a body hanging off a building, they're not looking for a narrative. They're having a visceral feeling."

At night, the plaza will become a concert and dance venue. There will be a live silent disco and urban music and roots bands at the Boston Art Music and Soul Fest on Friday, Oct. 13, and a global dance party with Pico Picante on Saturday, Oct. 14.

"Expect surprises," Bradbury said.

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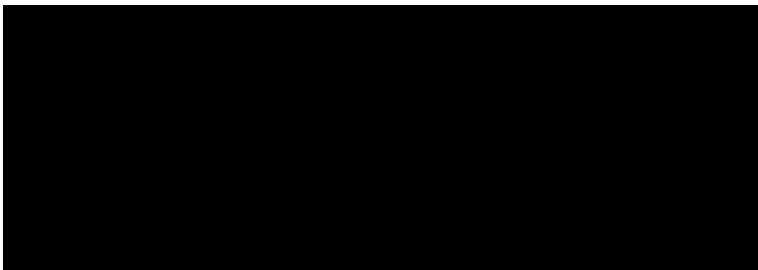
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