



We heard about this fabulous event from several people in the community and were lucky enough that Gina Bearne, last issue's road trip writer, was planning to spend the weekend along the Art Walk. She shares her experience of this event – we won't miss it next year.

artsy
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STORY: GINA BEARNE

A WONDERFUL WALK IN 'THIS PLACE' – THE DANFORTH

'What is this place?' This was the question posed by the event, Art of the Danforth and answered by many artists and members of the community along the Danforth between Greenwood and Woodbine at a myriad of primarily outdoor installments. Organized by DECA - the Danforth East Community Association, an independent group of locally-based individuals, this new community art walk took place over the last week in April. It was rooted in the belief that art has the power to cross divisions and draw people together.

East Danforth's population includes an above average percentage of artists and Art of the Danforth certainly showcased some amazing talent, but it also provided a potent reminder that creativity and art belong to all of us. As I admired silhouettes in paper and cellophane on the windows of the Community Housing Complex, a resident stood proudly in profile – "that's me!", he proclaimed.

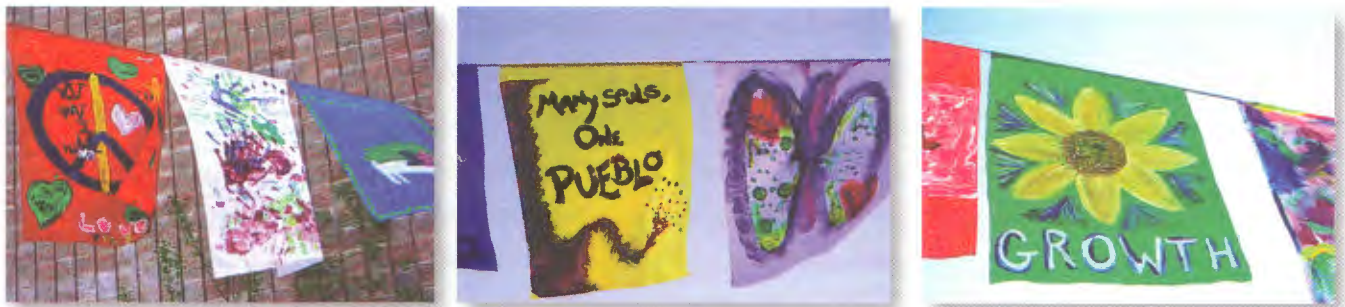
Cristina Delago helped young immigrants create

banners at Woodgreen Immigrant Services; Heidi Pospisil populated Coxwell Library with silhouettes made by local residents; children and families fashioned flamboyant flags that flew above the pit left behind when the hardware store near Woodbine burned down; and, in "Prism", a series of photo mosaics displayed in the three TTC stations along the strip, local photographers – amateurs, hobbyists and professionals, children, teens and adults – contributed to a colourful snapshot of the Danforth East community that was definitely greater than the sum of its parts.

Walking the street during Art of the Danforth was a veritable voyage of discovery. No one could miss the big, bright, coroplast silhouettes of The Pigeon Paradigm Project designed by Real and Barbara Eguchi that tied the art walk together. Pigeons roosted in participating shops and businesses to indicate art on display. A howling wolf, giant carrots, a lovers' kiss in front of the Roxy Cinema, all these

THE CARROTS AND STRAWBERRIES REPRESENTING THE FARMLAND THAT WAS ONCE HERE; AND THE ATTEMPT AT THE LONGEST SCULPTURE





NEIGHBOURHOOD KIDS CREATED FLAGS TO FLY AT THE SITE WHERE THE HARDWARE STORE BURNT DOWN NEAR WOODBINE

and more celebrated aspects of the Danforth's natural and cultural heritage, as well as the vibrant life that exists here.

Annie Wong's "Public Display of Affection" consisted of notes in obscure places that contained a secret, a confession, a personal message from an anonymous lover. Though not found by everyone, the notes caused one to stop and step outside the everyday, caught up in the poetic vignettes, some dark, some joyous. Some found these notes disconcerting, but for me they were a delight, momentary glimpses of the untold stories that are our lives.

Throw pillows brought unexpected comfort to Coxwell Parkette. Each pillow was screenprinted with an image of a domestic object representing symbols of both the home and the private sphere. Artist Laura Brown challenged people to make themselves 'at home' in a public place, and to consider what 'home' means in the context of community.

On May Day, in East Lynn Park, an attempt was made to set a new world record for the longest freestanding sculpture in the world. Jerry Silverberg led children and families in linking together simple square and round dowels, and garden stakes as connectors. By the time I arrived, the materials had been used up. Such was the enthusiasm that the work continued, with wood from the start of the structure being removed and re-used to take it further round the park. And, in a fundamental human impulse towards decoration,

the sculpture was lovingly studded with golden dandelions.

With more than fifty artists involved, as well as a host of community organizations and individual volunteers, these were just some of the highlights of an event that encompassed dance, music, graffiti art, sculpture, paintings, photographs, history displays and more. Art of the Danforth seemed to generate a new energy. People are already talking about a bigger, better event next year. Business owners are keen to be more involved. Politicians are hinting at further funding. There is a genuine sense that art can make a difference. "What you are doing here is rebuilding a neighbourhood, taking a place that has gone through difficult times and showing people how beautiful it can be and how creative our soul is," said MPP Peter Tabuns.

'What is this place?' Diverse, rich in talent, culture and community spirit, there is certainly more here than meets the eye. East Danforth is alive and well.

THE IN-SUBWAY PHOTO EXHIBITS FROM FAR AND NEAR

