

SWARM II: Final Report

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Summary

Swarm II occurred Sept. 7, 2001. Fifteen artist run organizations participated in this city wide evening of coordinated openings, which was attended by several hundred people. Some of the highlights of the project include a multi purpose poster/ pamphlet, a video installation in limousines that shuttled groups of people from zone to zone and the comprehensive group press kit. The main recommendations of this report focus on building on the successes, like the poster and the limousine project, while advising that special attention be placed on logistics due to the increasing attendance at the event. Overall the project was extremely successful, bringing out even more new audience members than the previous year and generating increased press coverage.

Fundraising

Applications were made for funding from the Hamber and Koerner, foundations as well as the BC Arts Council. The Hamber increased its support from the previous year, from \$500 to \$750. The BC Arts Council contributed \$1000 to Swarm. I suspect that support for the Swarm initiative is growing and that slightly greater support can be sought next year. I also recommend inquiring about funds from the Office of Cultural affairs and the Canada Council for the Arts. PAARC continued to be the main source of funding for the last Swarm.

| Expenses | Receipt | Date | Amount |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Swarm Coordinator | Demian Petryshyn | Nov. 5, 2001 | \$ 1,000.00 |
| Press Kits: Supplies | Staples | Jul.14, 2001 | \$ 43.48 |
| Press Kits: Photos | London Drugs | Jul.19, 2001 | \$ 12.32 |
| Press Kits: Photos | G king | Jul. 25, 2001 | \$ 67.33 |
| Press Kits: Supplies | ACM Signs | Jul. 16, 2001 | \$ 68.40 |
| Press Conference: Gift for Speaker | Marquis Wine Cellar | Aug. 28, 2001 | \$ 40.00 |
| Press Conference: Refreshments | Senses | Sept. 7,2001 | \$ 133.16 |
| Press Conference: Refreshments | Glory Foods | Sept. 7,2001 | \$ 11.99 |
| Publicity Material: Photocopies | AJ Graphics | Aug. 24, 2001 | \$ 28.50 |
| Publicity Material: Photocopies | AJ Graphics | Jul. 16, 2001 | \$ 68.40 |
| Postering | Perry | Aug. 28, 2001 | \$ 128.40 |
| Poster Prodcution: Courier | Fed Ex | Aug. 8, 2001 | \$ 17.64 |
| Poster Prodcution: Designer | Robin Mitchel | Jun. 21, 2001 | \$ 1,000.00 |
| Poster production: Printing | Rhino | Aug. 29, 2001 | \$ 1,111.50 |
| Press Kits: Postage | Canada Post | Jul. 28, 2001 | \$ 39.48 |
| <u>Total Expenses</u> | | | <u>\$ 3,770.60</u> |
| Revenues | | | |
| Hamber | | | \$ 750.00 |
| BC Arts Council | | | \$ 1,000.00 |
| PAARC | | | \$ 2,000.00 |
| <u>Total Revenues</u> | | | <u>\$ 3,750.00</u> |

Poster/Marketing

One of the central initiatives of Swarm has been posters that publicized all the openings in the city. The front of this year's poster included a map of all the venues and brief listings for all the events. On the back of the poster were descriptions of all the Artist Run Centres in BC and a brief text explaining the nature and role of these organizations. After Swarm was over, the parts of the poster containing Swarm information were cut off and the remaining text and map were folded down into an advocacy brochure. The poster was designed by Robin Mitchel, and one thousand copies were printed by Rhino Graphics. It was completed and distributed around the city and to schools two weeks prior to the event.

Press Kit/ Press

The main strategy for generating press exposure was the development of a comprehensive press kit. The Contents of the kit included:

- Press Release
- Press Conference Info Sheet
- Map of Event locations
- Summary of Events
- Photographs
- Individual Gallery Press Releases

The goal of developing the kit was to make writing an article on Swarm II as easy as possible. To this end I endeavored to obtain photographic prints (not digital files) that could be used to represent each show participating in Swarm. While using this media did streamline the process for some publications others still asked for digital files. I recommend that for next year photographic prints still be collected but that a CD of scans be made from them. Collecting multiple copies of prints from each gallery was a cumbersome process. I recommend that the coordinator collect one print from each gallery and get them duplicated in one go, this should cost approximately, \$120. The benefit of providing printed press with this material greatly increases the chances of receiving prominent color press coverage.

The press kit was mailed to selected publications two months before the event. Kits without images and folios were sent to television and radio media. All these kits were followed up with a fax approximately a week and a half before the event. Attempts were made to contact press directly by phone but were, for the most part, unsuccessful. I recommend that the press kit continue to receive close attention and that it be sent to national arts magazines even earlier than two months in advance.

In addition to the press kit I organized a press conference. It occurred the morning of the event. A number of curators and artists from the participating shows were in attendance, Keith Wallace, made a short presentation on the nature and role of artist run centres in Vancouver (see attached transcript) and breakfast snacks were provided. The intention for this event was to attract television and radio media, unfortunately, this strategy failed to attract any media. Despite this "lack of success" I recommend that the press conference continue as part of the plan. It provides an opportunity for the gallery employees and artists to touch base with each other before the busy evening and if the broadcast media does develop an interest in covering Swarm there is a conference already in place.

Events/ Zones

Fifteen Artist Run Centres and independent spaces participated in this years Swarm. The criteria for inclusion was that the organization promotes the principles of Artist Run Culture and was located in close geographic proximity to the three major groupings of PAARC member organizations. The primary goal of Swarm is to promote PAARC members but the dynamism of the event is increased by the participation of ideologically similar organizations. The following organizations participated in Swarm II:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Access | 206 Carrall |
| Artspeak | 233 Carrall |
| Centre A | 849 Homer |
| Crying Room | 157 E Cordova |
| DYNAMO | 142 W Hastings |
| grunt gallery | 116 - 350 E 2nd |
| Gallery Gachet | 88 E Cordova |
| Gallery 83 | 83 E Pender |
| Helen Pitt Gallery | 882 Homer |
| KSW | 201 - 505 Hamilton |
| Moonbase | 227 Carrall |
| Or Gallery | 103 - 480 Smithe |
| The Wall Gallery | 1975 Pine |
| Western Front | 303 E 8th |
| Video In | [Mobile Installation] |

The PAARC member centres can be grouped into three areas of the city. Downtown, Gastown and Main and Broadway area. This year Video In, presented video installations in three limousines that shuttled groups of people among these three groupings. This was a particularly successful way of encouraging audience sharing, if Video In is not going to continue this project next year, I recommend that a similar strategy be developed by the Swarm coordinator.

The high levels of attendance from the previous year increased even further this year. Each of the Fifteen venues reported being full of people for the entire evening. Last year late night parties were planned and publicized. This gave the people attending Swarm a place to go at the end of the evening and facilitated wrapping the evening up at a reasonable hour. This year, I did not publicize the late night parties. This, in combination with increased attendance seemed to make navigating the evening harder for audience members. I recommend that in preparation for another increase in attendance next year, special attention be paid to security and audience movement. An organized and publicized late night party should also help maintain an orderly and fun evening.

Transcript

Keith Wallace: Speaking at the SWARM Launch Sept. 7, 2001

We are here because of SWARM which is an event that celebrates Artist Run Centre culture and the role Artist Run Centres play within the community of galleries in Vancouver. It is also a very important moment to raise the public profile of Artist Run Centres, to help most of the public, who have no idea what Artist Run Centres are.

Artist Run Centres have a very long history in Canada. They started out in the late sixties/early seventies on an informal basis. They were places for artists to work without the constraints imposed by museums or private galleries and to work without the burden of the tastes of critics, curators or gallerists. It was a time of experimental art and a lot of museums and private galleries were either unwilling or unable to present that work. So artists developed their own spaces where they could work in the context of their own ideas and on their own terms. This is one of the really important things that Artist Run Centres have provided.

By 1976, the Canada Council was acknowledging the activities of Artist Run Centres and decided to fund them. In that year there were 15 across Canada, a number of which were in Vancouver. Two of them, the Western Front and Video In are still active. Both opened their doors in 1973 so they are about to reach their 30th year of activity. Now, I'd say, there are over a hundred of these types of centres across Canada, which attests to the fact that there is a need for these spaces in Canada and within the art system.

Artist Run Centres are literally centres that are run by artists, the staff, the boards of directors and committees are primarily composed of practicing artists. These supporters of Artist Run Centres put in almost endless hours to ensure the success of their organizations. The thing that is distinct about Artist Run Centres is that they provide a space for experimentation, to address new ideas without the constraints of commercial interest or public taste. They are the envy of artists from other countries because most other countries don't have this system in place. Seattle, which is a larger city than Vancouver, and is more affluent has maybe two Artist Run Centres while Vancouver has approximately fifteen.

The ideas we now see in museums around contemporary art were first developed and nurtured in Artist Run Centres. The exhibition *These Days*, that just closed at the Vancouver Art Gallery proves that. There were eighteen to twenty artists in that exhibition and I would say most of them are working within the ARC system or have emerged from it. Also, to attest to the importance of Artist Run Centres to the overall Canadian Art System is the fact that many of our most significant artists working today also emerged through the Artist Run Centre system in Vancouver. You can cite Stan Douglas, Ken Lum, Paul Wong, Jin Me Yoon, Attila Richard Lucacs. This includes curators as well, for example, Diana Agautis who is the chief curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery; one of her first positions was at the Western Front. Reid Sheir who was with the Or Gallery, has just landed the job at the Contemporary Art Gallery as curator. The artists and curators who have come through the ARC system are now having an important impact on the Canadian art system.

The importance of SWARM, is that it is an opportunity to bring a higher public profile to our Artist Run Centres. Most Artist Run Centres have a very small staff, and don't have a lot of financial resources, so they are unable, individually, to realize ambitious public relations projects such as SWARM. I think that the collaboration of the Artist Run Centres to provide an evening like this, to open the Fall season is a really excellent idea. It was extremely successful last year. It provides the public with the opportunity to tour all these galleries in one evening and to introduce themselves to what is going on in Artist Run centres.