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- Thursday**
- »Next Story»
- News**
- Local News**
- Opinion**
- Business**
- Sports**
- Quest**
- Night & Day**
- The Last Week**
- Weekly Sections**

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OUT GOING

Art Museum 101

SDMA fest uses variety of activities to lure in the easily intimidated

By Wendi Whitmore

July 20, 2006

It's easy for many of us to find art museums intimidating. "Is that art or am I a fool because I don't get it?" some may ask themselves as they walk through the hallowed halls of an art museum.

The San Diego Museum of Art is trying to solve that problem, and is busy finding ways to make art interesting to all.

This Sunday is a good example as the museum offers its Family Festival featuring "Andy Warhol's Dream America: Screenprints From the Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation." Admission to the museum is free during the festival and tours of the Warhol exhibit will be given (in English and Spanish).

Beginning at noon in front of the museum there will be artists doing hands-on art projects with kids, including postcards children can design that will be put into a time capsule to be opened in 20 years. From noon to 2 p.m. the Disco Pimps will be performing live 1970s music and there will be games and activities, including a soup-can stacking contest, a Warhol-style trivia game and an improv group will lead the audience in interactive skits.

"Part of the way to show people art they may like, to get them interested, is to have them be part of activities like these," said Ramon Hernandez, acting director of education. "It makes it fun, and who knows what they will stumble on that they like? Once they are at the event or activity they can find something there, or it gets them in the museum and they might realize that something else they like they never would have found otherwise."

Those with the most day-to-day interaction with the public are the docents, trained guides who work with different groups as they tour the museum's exhibitions, including the Warhol show.

"People ask a lot of really open-ended questions of the docents," said Hernandez. "One example would be, 'Why did the artist use blue?' Well, the docent is able to answer that question."

Visitors also can learn about art by attending the museum's Insight Gallery Talks, often given by an exhibition's curator. The speakers offer more in-depth looks at a specific exhibition or collection and it's a great way to learn about an artist and the background of his or her pieces.

DATEBOOK

Family Festival

*Noon to 4 p.m. Sunday;
San Diego Museum of
Art, Balboa Park | Free;
(619) 232-7931 or
www.sdmart.org*

Another opportunity to learn about art, in this case the art of film, is the museum's Screen on the Green series, Thursday night film screenings at 8 p.m. on the museum's east lawn.

Admission to the movie is free, and you'll get to check out such classic films as "Some Like It Hot" (Aug. 3), "A Day at the Races" (Aug. 10), "The Searchers" (Aug. 17) and "Viva Las Vegas" (Aug. 24).

Bring a picnic and make a day of it. The museum is open until 9 p.m. Thursday.

■ Wendi Whitmore is a San Diego writer.

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