

# HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

## An Antidote to the Art Fairs: Open Studios in Long Island City

by [Patrick Neal](#) on May 15, 2015



Foreground: José Carlos Casado's installation "Sacrifice," background: 'When We're Not Making Frames,' an exhibition showcasing the artwork of Bark Frameworks Staff at the The Falchi Building (photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

A five-day celebration of the arts in Long Island City got underway on Wednesday and will continue through Sunday night. In its fifth year, [LIC Arts Open](#), founded by actor [Richard Mazda](#) and artist [Karen Dimit](#) in 2011, brings together artists, galleries, local community groups, and businesses from around Western Queens. The festival showcases a variety of fine art offerings within a manageable number of days and neighborhood blocks. Participants can enjoy art openings, panel discussions, and performances, most of which happen in galleries but are just as likely to pop up in restaurants, a frame shop, real estate

offices, or a community garden. The main event (beginning tonight and running through the weekend), will be the open studios, when artists welcome visitors to experience their artworks up close.

Long Island City has had a rich community of artists for years. Several of the buildings that house large artist communities will be participating, but there are also smaller spaces with individual artists opening the doors to their homes. Walking up and down Vernon Boulevard, the main drag in Long Island City, one will spy sandwich boards identifying participating venues and it's easy to stop by a cafe or restaurant to find a brochure that covers the festival. This guide, which lists times and dates of specific events and provides a map of the area, [can also be downloaded](#) at the LIC Arts Open website. The map is recommended since numbered streets in Long Island City can be confusing, reappearing as an Avenue, Road, or Drive, and the scope of the festival actually abuts Astoria.





## Opening night party at The Local

The official opening night ceremony for LIC Arts Open 5 was held on Wednesday evening with a party at [The Local](#), a new hostel-style hotel that appears to be attracting many young European tourists. Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer, fresh from his recent victory of establishing a [cultural plan for the arts in New York City](#), was a special guest. Richard Mazda gave a welcoming speech while a Latin Jazz band provided entertainment. Paintings, drawings, and assemblages lined the walls of the space with some standout pieces by the artist [Jessica Maffia](#). On display were her large-scale pencil drawings depicting the distressed, alien surfaces of urban walls.

Further south in the more bustling area where Vernon Boulevard and Jackson Avenue converge, there was an assortment of solo musicians and ensembles performing and artwork on display in funky, DIY spaces. At [Matted LIC](#), the artist [Marla Lipkin](#) showed landscape paintings depicting the wetlands of Eastern Queens while [Jonathan Lev](#) exhibited large charcoal drawings of family and friends at [Rockaway Brewery](#). Artist [Conrad Stojak](#) greeted visitors who came to enjoy his sculpture of a parking meter sprouting up from the grounds of [LIC Community Garden](#). Looking closer, through the meter's glass window, one could make out a tiny diorama of a homeless man on a park bench. At [Open Door](#) restaurant, I walked into a panel discussion led by curator [Miguel Luciano](#) from the [Queens Museum](#) where artists were discussing their practices in relation to the agendas of different art institutions.



Artist Conrad Stojak in LIC Community Garden with his piece “Overlooked Eden”

On Thursday night, a barrage of exhibition openings and performances celebrating 30

years of the artist collective [LIC-A](#) were strewn between [The Falchi Building](#), [The Factory LIC](#), and the [Paper Factory Hotel](#). A shuttle van was provided as people darted from one venue to the other taking in group shows. Some highlights of the evening were the very different urban landscapes of artists [Violet Baxter](#) and [Marjorie Van Cura](#). Baxter's were like tone poems of the streets and buildings around her studio, while Van Cura presented lyrical and minimal environments rendered in mixed media on film. [Shandoah Goldman](#)'s duet titled "FERRUM" had two performers in elegant blue garb chasing each other through the gallery space, occasionally stopping to inspect the room or breaking into an athletic pas de deux. Other dance pieces from the "[site moves](#)" portion of the festival were performed alongside the visual art.



Musician performing at LIC Bar (click to enlarge)

In the area south of Queens Plaza, below the Queensboro Bridge, The Local is just one of a spurt of hotels that have appeared in Long Island City in the last few years. It's an industrial area where most of the festival's participating art studio buildings reside, including [Diego Salazar Studios](#), [LIC Art Center](#), [Juvenal Reis Studios](#), etc. The nearby artist-occupied [Wills Building just sold for 43.5 million](#), causing some concern. The word on the street, from artists I spoke to, is that it's just a matter of time before this section of Long Island City is rezoned for residential properties making way for a slew of new condos. With an eye on what the future may hold, landlords have been reigning in art studio leases and inflating rents.

This hasn't dampened the proceedings however, as the events of the first two nights felt

like a block party. The fair in past years has had an easygoing charm as LIC is a place where artists, merchants, city workers, and neighbors commingle and are friendly with one another. With additional film screenings, performance art, silent auctions, and punk and garage bands scheduled for this weekend, the best is yet to come.



“Dinner Without an Agenda” panel discussion at Open Door restaurant presented by the Queens Museum with curator Miguel Luciano and artists



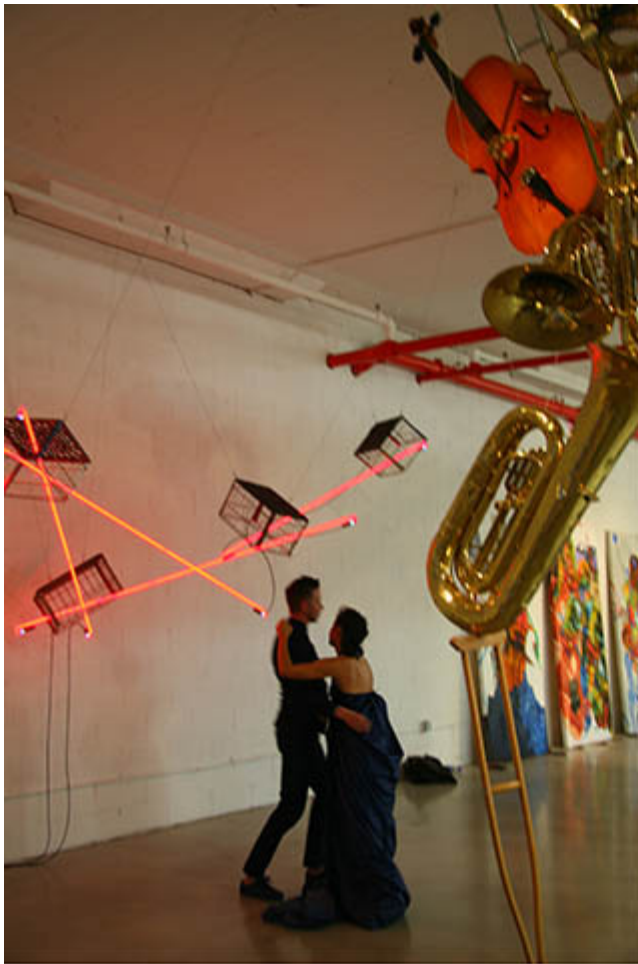


Celebrating LIC-A's "30th Anniversary Exhibition" at The Paper Factory Hotel





Artists from Juvenal Reis Studios participating in the Open Studios, top left: Marjorie Van Cura, right: Donna Levinstone, bottom: Russell Floresch



Performance from the "site moves" portion of the festival, top left: Shandoah Goldman's duet "FERR

right: Valerie Green/Dance Entropy's "Weapons of Time" movement installation; bottom: a performer by Ella Rosewood during the exhibition "Shangri-La in LIC"



Right: Matted LIC will be exhibiting the paintings of artist Marla Lipkin; left: Gianna Cerbone of Manducatis Rustica which is showing the work of artist Gildo Nicolo Spadoni

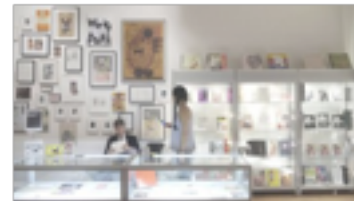
[LIC Arts Open 5](#) continues at [various venues](#) across Long Island City through May 17.



Art Rx: 2012 Northside  
Festival Edition



Art Rx



Art Rx