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BENT ON ART FESTIVAL GIVES KOOTENAY PRIDE A CREATIVE OUTLET

- The festival runs from August 27th to September 2nd in Nelson, BC, and the main art exhibition will travel to Fernie, BC, from September 27th to October 14th.
- Workshop spots are available to local, LGBTQ+ identified community members and artists; register by emailing info@samontecruzstudios.com.
- Festival includes workshops, multiple art exhibitions, a celebratory reception and a Sunday market, contact bentonartfest@gmail.com if you are interested in being a vendor in the market.

Nelson, BC - Kootenay Pride attendees are encouraged to get in touch with their artistic side this year with the addition of the first **Bent On Art: Kootenay Queer & Trans Festival**. The week-long festival will showcase art by queer and trans artists and craftspeople in the Kootenay region, and includes sliding-scale workshops for both LGBTQ+ artists and community members, two art exhibitions at Kootenay Studio Arts, Selkirk College, with a reception featuring local performers, and a Sunday market in Hall Street Plaza on the afternoon of the Pride Parade along Baker Street. The festival runs in conjunction with Kootenay Pride festivities in Nelson, BC, from August 27th to September 2nd, and the exhibition featuring local LGBTQ+ artists will travel to the Fernie Museum where it will be on display from September 27th to October 14th.

Samonte Cruz was inspired to start organizing within the LGBTQ+ arts community after they moved to Nelson, BC, in 2015 to attend Kootenay Studio Arts. "When I moved to the Kootenays I was impressed to find such a supportive and thriving the arts scene but was surprised by the lack of opportunities for LGBTQ+ artists to promote their work, especially given the long history of Pride events in the region." Local artist Maggie Shirley, who serves as curator and gallery assistant at Kootenay Gallery of Art in Castlegar, BC, became a supporter of the project early on, and acts as a curator mentor to Cruz. "It will be of good benefit to the queer community to have this avenue for creative expression and for the whole community in general to have artistic work by queer folk for their contemplation and enjoyment," she says, "This has always been an obvious element that has been missing in the over 20 years of Kootenay Pride celebrations."

Cruz brings over 15 years of community organizing experience with them to Nelson, BC. They moved from a small town in BC where they lived for just over a year. Cruz didn't feel safe being out as queer or trans, so they were excited to start building community here in the Kootenays. "I'm all about creating spaces- getting everything into place to create the potential for something great to happen." And it did. The idea gained support from friends and community members, and became a reality when the coordinating committee, a group of five local queer and trans artists, were awarded three grants to support the festival this spring.

Local long-time community organizer and trans advocate Christopher Moore is excited for the festival as well. "This event is very important to show visibility in our arts community... visibility fosters inclusion, connection, and pride in individuals as well as inclusion with the [larger] communities."

The main exhibition features a broad selection of work by LGBTQ+ artists in the Kootenay region and will be open to the public for viewing in Nelson August 27th to September 2nd. The show includes artwork ranging from digital art and photography to pottery and painting, even bronze casting. Bent On Art will host a celebratory reception from 6pm to 9pm on Saturday, September 1st, with light snacks and live performances by local artists. Viewing hours for the local LGBTQ+ art exhibition are 12pm to 6pm Monday through Friday, 6pm to 9pm Saturday, and 3pm to 6pm on Sunday. The exhibition and reception will be held at Kootenay Studio Arts, Selkirk College, 606 Victoria street. Following its installation in Nelson, the exhibit will travel to the Fernie Museum where it will be installed from September 27 to October 14 in conjunction with Fernie Pride and in partnership with the Fernie Pride Society.

The **Community Arts Workshop** is open to LGBTQ+ identified community members in the Kootenay region, regardless of experience, and takes place on August 27th and 28th from 9am to 1pm. Registration is \$40-\$65 sliding scale, and the deadline to register is August 20th. The **Masterclass for Emerging LGBTQ+ Artists** is tailored toward folks that have actively explored creative expression in any medium, either formally or on their own, and runs from August 29th to the 31st, 9am to 1pm. Registration is \$60-\$100 sliding scale, and the deadline to register is August 22nd. Partial scholarships are available for indigenous folks and people with low income. LGBTQ+ identified community members and emerging artists interested in attending workshops can register by emailing info@samontecruzstudios.com. Workshop space is limited.

The **Bent On Art: Kootenay Queer & Trans Festival** is made possible by community partners including the Nelson and District Women's Centre, Kootenay Gallery of Art, Fernie Museum, Fernie Pride, and Samonte Cruz Studios. Funding is provided by Province of British Columbia, Columbia Basin Trust, and Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance.

If you are an LGBTQ+ identified person interested in being a vendor at the Sunday Market please email bentonartfest@gmail.com. For general information including an up-to-date schedule of events, and links to applications for performing at the Bent On Art reception or becoming a festival volunteer, visit www.samontecruzstudios.com/bent-on-art. Follow us on Instagram: @BentOnArtFest or Facebook: www.facebook.com/BentOnArtFest.

Appendix

Mission Statement: Bent On Art: *Kootenay Queer & Trans Art Festival* is a series of events designed to promote the work of LGBTQ+ artists in the Kootenays while creating educational opportunities, fostering community connection, and promoting resilience through the arts.

Festival Schedule:

Local LGBTQ+ Art Exhibition | *August 27th to September 2nd*

An art exhibition featuring selected works by local LGBTQ+ artists. Open to the public for viewing 12pm-6pm, Monday-Friday, 6pm-9pm on Saturday and 3pm-6pm on Sunday.

Kootenay Studio Arts, Selkirk College, 606 Victoria Street, Nelson, BC

Community Arts Workshop | *August 27th and 28th | 9am-1pm*

Registration Fee: \$40-\$65 sliding scale

Registration Deadline: August 20th

Masterclass for Emerging LGBTQ+ Artists | *August 29th to the 31st | 9am-1pm*

Registration Fee: \$60-\$100 sliding scale

Registration Deadline: August 22nd

Bent On Art Reception | *Saturday, September 1st | 6pm-9pm*

A celebratory night with food, music, and live performances by local artists.

Kootenay Studio Arts, Selkirk College, 606 Victoria Street, Nelson, BC

LGBTQ+ Market | *Sunday, September 2nd | 1:30pm-5:30pm*

A market featuring local LGBTQ+ artists and craftspeople. To register to be a vender contact bentonartfest@gmail.com.

Hall Street Plaza (at Baker Street and Hall Street)

Bent on Art Exhibit | *Thursday, September 27th to Sunday, October 14th*. For viewing times contact the [Fernie Museum](#).

Fernie Museum, 491 2nd Avenue, Fernie, BC.

Fuze: Pride Edition | *Friday, October 12th | 8:00pm-1:00am*

A celebratory night with live performances followed by dancing.

Fernie Museum, 491 2nd Avenue, Fernie, BC.