

chicagoist

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Artropolis '08: City in a Mart



[Artropolis](#) takes over the Merchandise Mart this weekend with five shows, dozens of special events, and thousands of visitors roaming the halls for a dose (or overdose) of culture. Two years ago, [Art Chicago](#) made an [eleventh hour deal](#) with the Mart to stave off cancellation. Last year, the partnership was formalized and [Bridge Art Fair](#), [Artist Project](#), [Intuit Show](#), and [Antiques Fair](#) happily coexisted with the big show by the river. Actually, Bridge's organizers weren't so happy after all. Bridge guru Michael Workman [told the Reader](#) he didn't want his enterprise to be Art Chicago's "reject show."

And so, West Loop gallery owner [Kavi Gupta](#) brings the next best thing, an invitational exhibition of emerging art known as [Next](#). The more than 150 exhibitors include commercial and noncommercial galleries along with intriguing partnerships bringing work deemed contemporary and cutting-edge to the Mart's seventh floor.

The weekend schedule is downloadable ([PDF](#)). Here's what to expect on Chicago's busiest art weekend of the year:

Today:

Participating art galleries make final preparations and load-in, so call ahead to make sure your favorite space isn't closing early, opening late or taking the day off.

Tonight:

Preview Opening night sees subdued parties for industry professionals, media types, and plus-ones. Alcohol and hors d'oeuvres will be as plentiful as stories from the last [Art Basel](#).

Friday:

Students, out-of-town visitors, and Sun-Times employees playing hooky survey the field. Art Chicago will likely overwhelm in size and scope. Best case scenario, Next makes us forget about Bridge, Intuit improves upon last year's underwhelming show (we'll settle for 'whelmed'), and the Artist Project proves to be more than an afterthought.

Friday night:

Artropolis Gallery Night in the [Chicago Arts District](#) and the [Hyde Park Art Center's Creative Move](#) overnight celebration remind northsiders there's no shortage of quality art spaces south of Roosevelt.

Saturday:

The Mart's busiest day. Expect more jostling, more strollers and more cha-ching.

Saturday night:

If all this madness is somehow not enough for you, a half-zillion shows [open tonight](#) in River North and the West Loop, offering free bad wine and people watching. Free shuttles connect the Mart, the Chicago Brown line station, and the Peoria/Washington area.

Sunday:

Less busy and more hungover than Saturday. The Antiques Fair lives it up with complementary mimosas (served 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.).

Monday:

Striking a bargain with a curator hoping to travel light is possible but not to be expected.