

A celebration of originality at ArtPrize 2012

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7 photos

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A superficial look through the fourth iteration of the [ArtPrize](http://www.examiner.com/topic/artprize) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/artprize>) competition in [Grand Rapids](http://www.examiner.com/topic/grand-rapids) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/grand-rapids>), Michigan would suggest a more subdued and modest event compared to its predecessors. Through a combination of a stumbling economy and new rules changes to the competition that bar last year's top ten from competing, the ambitious building sized stained glass [art](http://www.examiner.com/topic/art) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/art>) and steampunk styled swine are absent, and in its place are a plethora of

smaller-scale projects that require closer look to find.

But the spirit of ArtPrize, the pursuit of art and expression through non-conventional means, still exists, and

here are some exhibits that are worth a look...

View slideshow: A Small Slice of ArtPrize 2012 (<http://www.examiner.com/slideshow/a-small-slice-of-artprize-2012>)

One man's trash is another man's treasure

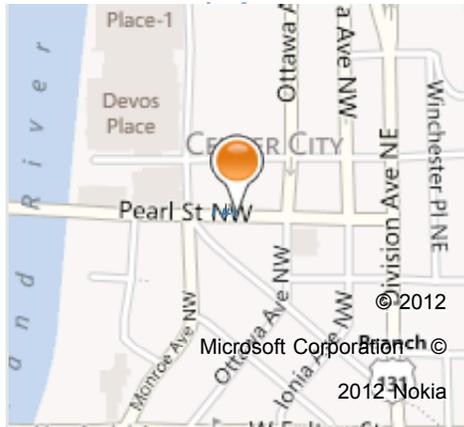
A recurring theme found in many of the exhibits blends an environmental message along with a way to temper the costs inherent to an Artprize exhibit, the use of recycled or reused materials.



Video: [Sara Doyon Danforth: Sun Painter](http://www.examiner.com/video/sara-doyon-danforth-sun-painter)

[Painter](http://www.examiner.com/video/sara-doyon-danforth-sun-painter)

(<http://www.examiner.com/video/sara-doyon-danforth-sun-painter>)



Location: Grand Rapids, Michigan

Sabine LeDieu's "RE-CYCLE Series", found just to the north of Calder Plaza, implements discarded bike accessories; wheels, handlebars, frames, and all into a series of sculptures that represent how the old and abandoned can be made new again.

Another striking example of how old things can find new purpose is John Andrew's "Norm", a nine-foot tall sculpture of a red dragon made entirely from recycled metals and found perched in front of the PNC Bank on the corner of Monroe Avenue and Pearl Street.

Inspired by the passing of Andrew's dog that is the namesake for the sculpture, as well as an early love for role-playing games; what makes the sculpture even more unique are the unseen details. For example, while a metallic heart rests within the sculpture as a representation of the inevitable process of life and death, it could also represent how even what has already been used and served its original purpose can find another life and another reason for existence.

Back on Calder Plaza, Sarah Haas takes it another step further. Her performance art offering "EcoDance/Raw Art Tour" not only relies heavily on recycled materials (over 75% of the exhibit), but is also intended as a merger of life and art and how humanity can reduce our footprint on our environment. Her trailer which she lives in doubles as her stage; a stage she willingly shares with other artists to show and tell their own stories.

Haas's website, <http://www.sarahhaas-rawart.com>, and YouTube channel, <http://www.youtube.com/user/truthcreateschoice>, gives even more content beyond what she is presenting at ArtPrize, as well as a full description of her mission statement.

Experience art up close

ArtPrize has always encouraged and drawn interactive pieces; works of art that appeal not just to the sense of

sight. This year is no different, but two in particular stand out.

Lucinda Wierenga's "A Garden of Unearthly Delights" is an exquisite sand sculpture set up at the Louis Campau Promenade on Monroe, and while the lavishly detailed and seemingly physically impossible castle complete with sea monsters entwined within its towers is remarkable in and of itself, what makes it even more unique is the circle of buckets filled with sand that surround the sculpture, encouraging viewers young and old to add their own touches to the exhibit.

Not to be outdone, over at Vandenberg Plaza near the Bridge St. bridge, Dave Ford has set up an exhibit that not only tests your eye, but your ear as well. Appealing to the inner child that raced for the swing set at recess and banged on any pot or pan we could get our hands on, "Swing Set Drum Kit" allows up to three patrons to attempt to make their own swinging percussion line, though your results may (poorly) vary at first. With practice and keen timing, however, some very catchy beats can follow your movements.

Harness the power of the sun

But there is more to ArtPrize than sculptures and canvas, paint and watercolor, metal, wood, and plaster. There is one artist, tucked away behind the Gerald R. Ford Federal Building on Michigan Street, who literally uses solar power to craft her artistry.

Using similar techniques to the mean-spirited little boy who uses it to bake ants on the sidewalk, Sara Doyon Danforth needs nothing more than a magnifying glass, a piece of wood, and the cooperation of the Michigan weather to make breathtaking scenes, like the skyline portrayed in her entry "Grand Rapids at the Heart of it".

With the color of the wood and the dark burnt etching from her technique, "Grand Rapids at the Heart of it" is a near perfect representation of the city at dusk from a vantage point across the Grand River looking towards downtown.

Danforth also has other works on display that aren't part of her official entry, most notably a map of the United States with markings representing the viewers that have appreciated her special twist to the world of art, as well as her current project in progress; an etching of Christ bearing the crown of thorns as commissioned by her husband.

And more to see...

To put it in perspective, these exhibits all came largely from a section of roughly four blocks, merely a small sliver of the over one thousand, five hundred and seventeen entries in one hundred and sixty one venues, both indoors and out. There's a lot more out there to see.

So lace up your shoes, or fill up those bike tires, or even hop on one of the many Art Bus shuttles that take one of the three, six, or nine mile tour routes through the downtown area.

To plot your route, or to find more information on the various exhibits, voting registration, and how and where to vote on your favorites, <http://www.artprize.org/> (<http://www.artprize.org/>) has everything you need to make

the most of your experience.

But don't take too long, voting for the first round of the competition ends Saturday, September 29th just a tick before midnight.



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Thomas Knapp has been a freelance writer for the Detroit Sports Rag and the Bleacher Report, with a handful of articles published by CBS Sportsline and the Associated Press. You may contact Thomas with your comments and questions.