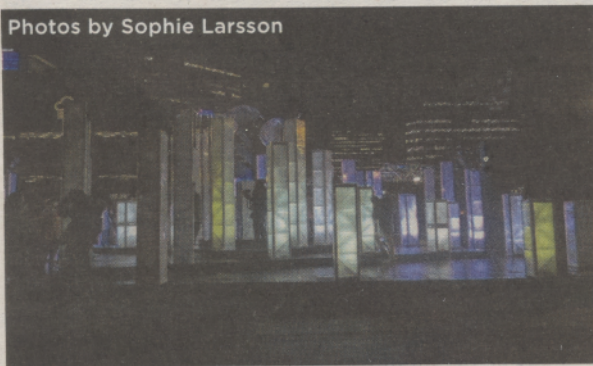


Winter nights bring river lights to Portland

Photos by Sophie Larsson



STORY BY OLIVIA LYNCH
STAFF WRITER

Nothing screams "Portland," quite like a Volkswagen Beetle repurposed as a disco ball.

Last weekend Portland celebrated the fifth anniversary of their Winter Light Festival, where the public walked around and interacted with the many collaborative exhibits created by the city's creative and technical minds. The west side of the festival took place along the Portland waterfront and went as far back as the Portland World Trade Center. "The reason I come with my husband is because he has this really cool creative and technical mind and I feel like this festival [has] a really good representation of bringing creativity and technology together," said Melody Hagen. Hagen, a three-year attendee of the festival, came to see the numerous attractions and show some support for her husband and his company that have been showcased for the last two years.

Those participating in the festivities watched the many roaming performers, ranging from fire jugglers to hula hoop dancers and even a glowing dance troupe. While some opted to cruise up and down the river to see the east side half of the festival, others attended light science seminars, or wandered around through the exhibits.

This year's festival was sponsored by a majority of local electrical, technological

and architectural companies. Businesses and creatives alike can take up to or over a year to plan and begin building their exhibits; creating and incorporating new technology, their teams work together to create a show that can inspire all ages to dream of new heights.

"It's amazing to see people come out here that can be a woodworker or an accountant somewhere but in their spare time they're building some crazy contraption that lights up and makes a little noise," said Derek Nickel, who helped to bring his team's exhibit to life.

Jimmy Hagen works alongside a creative team who came up with the design and meaning of their piece before Hagen's team of co-workers go into the physicality of the project. "I'm responsible for all the technology, so you see all the lights and sound going off the speakers, the projection... the fabrics that we had to put on, building a stage that it all sits on," said Hagen.

Hagen's team, including Nickel, are both employed and sponsored by Henry V. Last year their team created a large dome for the east side of the festival that allowed visitors to go inside and be projected onto the outside for others to see. This year, their exhibit, titled "Lost," consists of numerous lit rectangular columns of varying sizes making a forest of color and light. It was set on a geometric stage which served as a set of stairs throughout the piece. In the center, projectors and speakers are mounted and cast downward onto the stage depicting abstract visual art. The lights and dream-like techno music gave the piece its intended youthful and innocent mood. Since the piece is intended to be interacted with, people were encouraged to move about it and take photos.

"I just love that it's open to the public. Everybody and anybody can come. It's a very inviting festival because there's no rules or restrictions," Hagen said.

