



MoMA projects new art project

Museum unveils public art plan to show filmmaker's work on its exterior walls

by Amy Zimmer / metro new york

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MIDTOWN — Artist Doug Aitken will turn the Museum of Modern Art's exterior into a giant film screen this winter for his first free public artwork in the United States.

Aitken will set up seven projectors to present a series of five overlapping fictional stories of New Yorkers onto the MoMA's facades on 53rd and 54th streets and the walls overlooking its sculpture garden, as well as the west wall of the American Museum of Folk Art. The work will run nightly from Jan. 16 through Feb. 12, 2007, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the organizations that jointly commissioned the roughly \$1 million project — MoMA and non-profit public art group Creative Time — announced yesterday.

"It's about seeing the city inside out," Aitken said of the film. He is interested in turning public space into private space by showing the "insignificant moments that pass by."

Aitken started his 8-week filming schedule on Sunday and has scouted several locations ranging the top of the MetLife building to the sub-basement of Rockefeller Center. He's working with Dutch cinematographer Robby Müller, a veteran of indie cinema.

"I find the act of filming to be like public art, where you're bringing worlds together and mixing that energy," Aitken said. "Two days ago, I was talking to a female cabdriver and hearing her stories. A day before that, I was with the godfather of bike messengers."

He said the film would be a "kind of exploded cinema": "Movies have a beginning and end and there's something safe in that. With

this, it's more open. It's about the constantly changing rhythm and tempo of life." He is still figuring out what to do about sound.

Bloomberg said Aitken's project would "be unforgettable," and that it would help spark tourism in the winter months, when hotel occupancy drops by 10 percent.

"We support public art because it provokes thought, creates conversation and community," he said, also highlighting the economic benefits. According to MoMA's economic impact study released yesterday, the museum will generate \$2 billion over the three-year period since its November 2004 expansion, with roughly \$50 million in tax revenue for the city.

But viewers of the public work need not pay MoMA's \$20 entry fee. "It would be great if the project just caught the eye of people on the street," MoMA Director Glenn Lowry said.

"[Aitken's] work sets new experiences of narrative for us," said Creative Time's Executive Director Anne Pasternak. "These buildings will be imbued with a new level of storytelling and will be animated, reclaiming modern architecture for art that has the power to engage beyond the walls of galleries and museums."

City benefits

- By promoting the project, the city hopes to help meet its goal to exceed the 42 million visitors that came here last year. Bloomberg also pledged \$15 million annually to achieve the goal of attracting 50 million visitors a year by 2015.
- According to MoMA's economic impact study, more than 2.67 million people visited during its first year of reopening with 28 percent from the area, 34 percent from other parts of the U.S. and 38 percent from other countries.