

Trapeze artists swing from giant 'Heron' sculpture at Voodoo Fest 2011

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The folks in charge of "Heron," the giant steel bird-shaped trapeze at **Voodoo Fest 2011** feared that the wind was too strong to ignite the propane-fueled fire-spewing wings. Too bad, because the members of the **Mystic Pony Aerial Troupe**, who swung gracefully from the great bird's beak, would have welcomed the warmth. One of the acrobatic young women who called herself Ooops said she was more apprehensive about wearing a leotard in the chill air than swinging from the Heron's bill.



Matthew Hinton, *The Times-Picayune*

Sarah "the Bobcat" Inman performs an aerial routine as part of the Mystic Ponies at the 2011 Voodoo Musical Festival in City Park in New Orleans Friday October, 28, 2011.

The strong cross wind was also a concern. But, Ooops said, the show would go on. She and the other trapeze artists, Niki Frisky and Sarah The Bobcat, would "just have to deal with it," she said. And so they did. As a small crowd gathered, the daring young women took turns flying through the air with, apparently, the greatest of ease. Even without the fire, the combination of the Mystic Pony Troupe and **Christina Sporrng's** Heron trapeze structure is the highlight of **Voodoo Music Experience 2011's** visual treats.

Elsewhere at the music festival in City Park, the autumn wind was more of an enhancement than a detriment. Jamin

Murphy's marvelous fish-shaped shade tent rose and fell gently with each gust, adding an oceanic pulse to the colorful sailcloth creation. Better still, Delaney McGuinness and Johnston Burkhardt's small forest of black pinwheels growled ominously as they spun, their bat-like fabric wings snapping in the torrent of air like Halloween harpies. Voodoo designer Stefan Beese admitted he was a bit concerned by the wind, but, he pointed out that the weather is just one of the challenges in presenting artwork in an outdoor concert environment.



It was a pleasure to inspect the beautiful metalwork as I climbed the stairs of the two-story "Fledgling" mechanical bird sculpture by Christian Ristow. It was less of a pleasure to sit in the "Fledgling" driver's seat pumping the bicycle pedals to activate the 20-foot wings. The gears are such that it takes roughly five minutes of pedaling to get the wings to slowly, slowly rise. At least, in the end, I was warmer than when I began.

New Orleans artist Ritchie Jordan's hands were stained blue, a hue that actually went pretty well with his purple shirt, purple fur kitten-ear hat and purple toenail polish. Jordan's blue hands were not a fashion statement; they were the result of a spill as he added blue dye to the water of his fleur-de-lis-shaped fountain made from recycled bicycle frames. The blue water, pumping through the vein-like transparent tubing that winds the fleur-de-lis skeleton was originally supposed to be red, indicative of the life blood of New Orleans, but the red dye was unavailable. The change of color didn't diminish Jordan's ardor for the city that inspired him.

"I love New Orleans like it was a person," he said.

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Voodoo Fest 2011 art and experimental architecture installations

Voodoo Fest 2011 is a playground of art and experimental architecture installations. In this opening day video tour, you'll see the following works in this order. Heron by Christina Sporrong with the New Orleans Mystic Ponies aerial group, Tornado by Jamin Murphy, Pinwheel Garden by Delaney McGuinness and Johnston Burkhardt, Fledgling by Christian Ristow, Live Mural Wall by Chris Berends and others, Sparkle TouT Taux by James Michalopoulos, Fish by Jamin Murphy and Fountain De Lis by Richie Jordan and Plan B. Read other stories about the art/architecture installations at NOLA.com. Follow Doug MacCash on Twitter at dougmaccashTP.

 [Watch video](#)

"Sometimes you might want to fly a balloon or something," he said, "and you just can't.

Which partially explains the absence of Doron Gazit's hovering inflated fabric display "Color plus Air." There was also trouble with the inflating fans Beese said. But all should be well by Saturday (Oct. 29) morning.

In a [preview of the Voodoo Fest 2011 visual displays](#), I noted that the tone of the sculptural installations was, to my eye anyway, more architectural than artistic per se. Tulane University architecture student Chris Berends agreed. In his view, Voodoo 2011 is a "stride toward a more structural and formalist" aesthetic. Berends' contribution is a 10-foot-tall wedge-shaped wooden wall with a built-in bench that will be spray painted and re-spray painted again and again in a graffiti style over the course of the

weekend festival.

Tulane architecture school graduate T. J. Bogan said that his term for architectural experiments that are not meant to result in a piece of furniture or a building is "architectural follies." Architectural follies; I like that. The cool, futuristic tone of Voodoo 2011's architectural follies is in perfect keeping with the sort of surrealistic science-fiction vibe of the fest.



Christina Sporrong

The wings of Christina Sporrong's 'Heron' trapeze structure -- seen here in a preview photograph -- are meant to burst into flame. The wind may prevent the propane flames on Friday (Oct. 28).