

DEPARTMENT OF commerce

Allston Village Street Fair: an urban Mardi Gras festival (where "urban" means "opposite"). [Sun 9.12.10. Harvard Ave. from Cambridge St. to Brighton Ave. 617.254.0632. noon/free. avsf.info]

GO | A city where it's easier to find a university than a gas station, Boston's been hosting CollegeFest at Hynes Convention Center for a quarter of a century. Catch live performances, snag schwag and get a jump on four years of temptation. [Sat 9.11.10-Sun 9.12.10. 900 Boylston St., Boston. noon/\$10. collegefest.com]



BUY | Remember back in third grade, when you thought you were pretty hot shit with a pair of safety scissors? Well, you got *nothing* on Papercuts by Joe. Local artist Joe Bagley crafts his loving homages to the "misplaced" art form of the silhouette out of a single piece of paper. What now, *Matisse*? [papercutsbyjoe.com, papercutsbyjoe.etsy.com]

ARTISAN'S ASYLUM

Union Square goes back to school

BY J. PATRICK BROWN | JPAT@DIGPUBLISHING.COM



As those of us who found ourselves suddenly rendered geriatric this weekend by the deluge of youth reminisced wistfully, far too much of the college experience is often taken for granted. Waking up around noon without having to have awkward conversations with your mother about how the economy *still* hasn't picked up. Exactly how much more forgiving campus police can be, compared to, say, *actual* police. And all those thousands of dollars of equipment lying around that you're actually actively *encouraged* to use.

It was that last point in particular that recent grads Gui Cavalcanti and his fiancée, Jenn Martinez, were particularly missing. Cavalcanti, who designs, by his own admission, "not the small kind of robots," and Martinez, a costume designer, hit the significantly less-accommodating real world with some rather demanding hobbies—hobbies that require a fair amount of resources, space and a healthy dose of community. So, they set about creating just that.

"Our initial plan was to assemble a whole bunch of tools and put them in a workshop, and then [we were] going to invite our friends and see if anybody was interested," explains Cavalcanti.

Armed with their idea and a few investments, the group recruited those like-minded friends and set to work, outfitting a cozy thousand-foot work-nook. After putting the word out, they held an inaugural meeting to gauge said potential interest. They were expecting at most around 20. The studio was packed at close to 100.

"We realized that we probably needed a bit more room."

Fortunately, this same time, Willoughby and Baltic, a local hackerspace (a shared community workspace where the electronically inclined can congregate to hammer out projects), was at a crossroads, trying to decide if they were going to expand their scope to the decidedly analogue.

"We had a more diverse field, but we both fundamentally wanted to provide a creative space for people to build," Cavalcanti says. "We took on one of their officers as a director on our board, and we assumed their space—so, all of a sudden, we went from 1,000 square feet to 10,000."

So in the scope of couple weeks, the Asylum went from an idea to very, very large reality. Each week, the group gets a little more

settled into their home off of Union Square. In addition to the DIY space and the ever-growing list of equipment, the Asylum also boasts classes from the introductory to the intermediate, on subjects ranging from arc welding to photography, electronics to fire-eating, and the group's eager to add even more.

"We got an email from a lady who wanted to teach an Introduction to Latex Clothing class. I ran it by the board, and one of the members, who is a goth, said, 'I have literally hundreds of friends who would be interested in this.'"

As the Artisan's Asylum continues to expand, both as a space and as a community, it becomes increasingly apparent exactly how successful Cavalcanti and Martinez have been in accomplishing what they set out to accomplish—not only creating a craft area, but creating a craft *atmosphere*, one that's genuinely invested, supportive and motivated toward producing art in its myriad forms.

Well, that, and as Cavalcanti puts it, "If you buy a \$10,000 sewing machines, you're going to use it." ☒

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