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Want to Tour Boston's Biggest Art Gallery?

Just walk by the convention center starting next week, when 'Art on the Marquee' will display six local artists on the 80-foot-tall screen.

BY [Matthew Reed Baker](#) POSTED ON 2/17/2012

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Last month when I toured [the Renzo Piano wing at the Gardner](#), staffers showed our group the big changes at the museum, all the while answering random questions, big and small. While most of us asked aesthetic and architectural questions, one guy had an obviously different agenda. As he walked around, he occasionally asked discreet questions about the Gardner's events and what kind of marketing endeavors the institution would be eager for. The guy was Larry Meehan, vice president of media and tourism at the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau, and it's his job to pump up our city for outsiders. As I secretly listened whenever he asked a question, it was a healthy reminder that arts are a key draw for this city, and the GBCVB is focused on how to sell it. And now, premiering next Thursday, Feb. 23, we have the biggest — literally — display of that merger of arts and the convention industry that we've ever seen.

It's called "[Art on the Marquee](#)", and it's a joint effort by the industriously innovative organization [Boston Cyberarts](#) and [the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority](#) — and it's a very literal title. The art by six Massachusetts artists will be displayed on the convention center's LED marquee, which is 80-foot-tall and seven screens across, for a total of 3,000 square feet of digital display for the artist to play with. Truly, this is the new wave of public art.

As for those artists and their work, they provide a sparkling range of work, from [Nell Breyer](#)'s loop of dancers falling on their heads to [Dennis Miller](#)'s video collage of manipulated Boston Marathon photos to [John Slepian](#)'s animated face sighing over a TV test pattern. Then there's [Jeff \(aka Jeffu\) Warmouth](#)'s humorous takes on pop imagery and consumerism, [Kawandeep Singh Virdee](#)'s abstract Urban Bloom, and [Ellen Wetmore](#)'s videos *Blue Boy Jumping* and *Pacing*. They live all over the commonwealth, have degrees from our local schools, and currently teach in our institutions like Smith and Hampshire colleges in the Pioneer Valley, UMass Lowell and Fitchburg State up north, and Northeastern right here in Boston. Check out a recent test from Ellen Wetmore's "Pacing":

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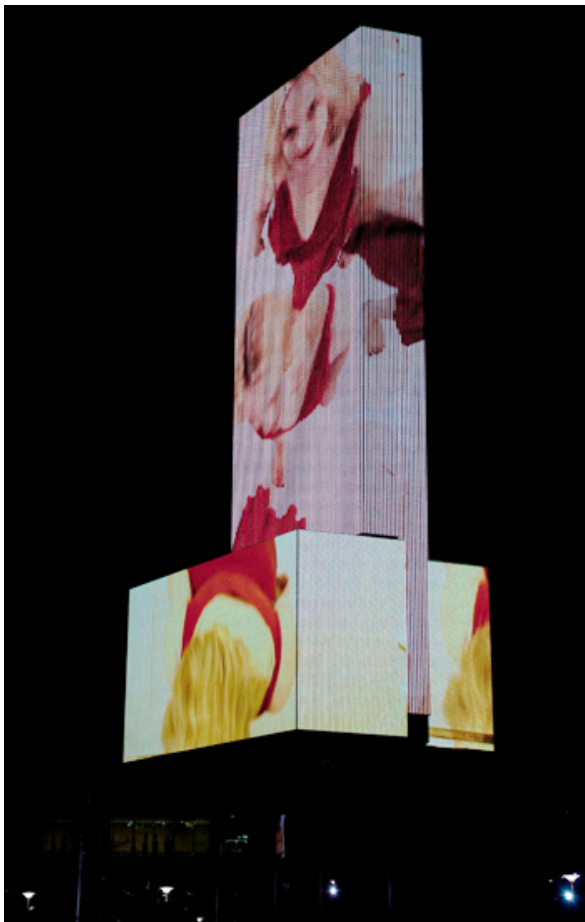
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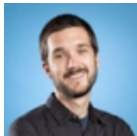




You can't get more exposure than this. It's public art at its most public. Literally 100,000 people walk by this marquee every day, and thousands more see it when big conventions come to town. Best of all, this is an ongoing project. These six artists were chosen from an open call back in December, and further RFPs will be issued this spring. Boston Cyberarts is working with Emerson and MassArt to look for work by current students, with plans to even include worthy work by talented high school kids down the line.










In short, it's hard not to see this as win-win. After all, the partnership is not commissioning works from around the country — they want to promote Massachusetts artists. And they're not dreamy landscapes of the Common or the Charles River, but pieces that are truly contemporary and forward-thinking — an image that can bring interest to the city and state as a generator of new art, a tourist destination, and of course, as a creative place to do business.

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