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Battambang's arts fest on again

Peter Olszewski / Khmer Times



A typical festival art exhibition. Supplied

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This year the collaboration will again center on a partnership with Siem Reap's The Giant Puppet Project – the project's puppets initially appeared at the inaugural city-wide art festival in Battambang in May 2019.

The Giant Puppet Project joins the Murals for Cambodia Festival as this year's partners for the festival, with iDEN Agency as the media partner.



S'ART Urban Art Festival is renowned for its street parade. Supplied

The main sponsors for this year's festival include the Swiss Foundation for Solidarity in Tourism, Tiger Beer, TotalEnergies, the Sabrina Group and Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

Siem Reap is also making a further contribution by providing performers from Siem Reap's Phare Circus, another example of bi-city collaboration as the circus itself was spawned at Battambang's revered Phare Ponleu Selpak non-profit arts school.

According to Phare Ponleu Selpak executive director Osman Khawaja, such festivals can be crucial to a city's cultural emergence.

"City-wide art festivals are important in re-establishing Battambang's identity as the art and culture hub of Cambodia and to eventually be recognised as a UNESCO creative city," he says.

"The sustainability, preservation and development of the various art forms will only happen if the local communities build a deeper appreciation for and take an active role in the arts, thus community participation in such festivals is vital."



Hip hop battle set for S'ART Urban Art Festival. Supplied

The festival's switched on communication assistant Chiern Piseth Samphallyka outlines the events historic highlights, noting, "This year marks the third edition of the festival after its soft launch in 2018 on the Phare Ponleu Selpak campus and a city-wide launch in 2019.

"After the cancellation of the 2021 edition due to the pandemic, the S'Art Urban Arts Festival will be back this June with a week of activities and a grand finale parade and concert. The festival aims to promote Battambang's cultural identity, enhance its creative economy, and contribute to the development of a thriving urban art scene."

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