

# HarborArts and the Great Outdoor Gallery

In the beginning, there was Cod...

BY AARON BARRERA

One thing Boston is certainly known for is its art scene, whether at an art museum, a photo gallery in one of the neighborhoods or even in one of the city's many parks. The museums charge admission most of the time, but make efforts to give discounts or have free days or nights at certain times. Galleries and parks tend to be free, including Boston's latest gallery outdoors on the East Boston waterfront, which is a unique setup in how it came to be.

For the longest time, there was a giant 40-foot steel codfish slowly taking shape in one of the buildings in the East Boston Shipyard and Marina. The welding torch and sparks were a frequent sight in the building's dim light. Cod. That famous fishing industry of Boston that is not the moneymaker it once was because of over-fishing. The assembled fish took a tour across the harbor to a few sites including Fan Pier before it was introduced as the first of many sculptures to reside in an outdoor shipyard gallery.

Behind the project is HarborArts, a non-profit group promoting the awareness of issues affecting our harbors, oceans and waterways. The artist behind *The Fish* is also Executive Director and Founder of Harbor Arts Steve Israel, who assembled a small team of artists and artisans to help.

It was the first of over 30 pieces of art that started popping up all over the shipyard once the warm months arrived: Octopi dangling from the side of a building, towels with money printed on them hanging like laundry to dry and, fittingly, a giant,

green meat cleaver right outside the shipyard's only restaurant, Scups in the Harbor. There's actually kelp fashioned from steel and concrete in front of our office, which is located in the shipyard.

Akin to presence behind the scenes in a museum as an exhibit is prepared and assembled, a number of the pieces could be seen on the ground mid-construction, like Iscariot, which is atop Building #17. Its tentacles seemingly flow in the wind.

Thalia Large from Scups noted people at the restaurant weren't quite coming out to the shipyard for the art exhibit yet, but that it would become an added treat to their foodie visit. Right outside across from the front patio, there's a tall traffic light made of wood and strips of green, yellow or red plastic for the lights.

Also, now that the gallery is officially open and the artwork is paired with descriptive signs, it can be more of a go-to destination.

Most of the art is fairly unique and invokes a sense of wonder and mystique. Chosen by judges including Randi Hopkins, associate curator across the harbor at the Institute of Contemporary Art, the artist selection is international, though local and regional artists were also included. The pieces are on loan from the artists for anywhere between a few months to several years. New additions will appear seasonally.

The outdoor waterfront gallery also focuses attention and awareness on our water resources. Granted, with water-themed art in an active shipyard right on the Boston



**Harbor View:** Assembled on shipyard grounds, Iscariot looks out onto Boston Harbor from its rooftop perch. (Photo by Aaron Barrera).

Harbor, it's hard not to have water on the mind.

The art aside, the other unique aspect of the gallery is, indeed, that it's in an active shipyard complete with boat builders, boaters and some office workers. It's the kind of place where a coffee truck stops by twice daily, the signature horn honking like a flock of geese, on the dot mid-morning and for lunch.

As for checking out the major art museums in the city, the three main ones are the Institute of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Fine Arts and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

On Thursday evenings, the Institute of Contemporary Art offers admission-free visits between 5 p.m. and closing. Plus, excepting December, the last Saturday of

each month is free for families with up to two adults and with children aged 12 and younger.

Every Wednesday afternoon after 4 p.m. until closing, the Museum of Fine Arts offers admission by voluntary contribution. The suggested amount is the price of regular adult admission, but less is acceptable. Also on July 30, the museum will host a Free Community Day, beginning at 10 a.m.

Just around the corner from the MFA, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum offers \$2 off if visiting both museums in a two-day period. Wearing Red Sox garb also gets \$2 off. Otherwise, those named Isabella, museum members and those celebrating birthdays get in free of charge. ■

Aaron Barrera is editorial manager at Travel New England. He may be reached at: [aaron@travelne.us](mailto:aaron@travelne.us)



**Hang Time:** It's not unusual to look up and see an octopus or two in this art gallery. The Fish rests on a roof near another piece of art. (Photos by Aaron Barrera)

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