



Art Marc's The Spot

HE'S NOT A FOODIE. He'd much rather eat cookies and cheap candy.

He's not a fashion plate. He only wears blue button-down shirts and gray or black pants.

And he's not a techie. He handwrites meeting notes

Meet an ambassador for Detroit's art scene.

BY JULIE YOLLES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRETT MOUNTAIN

and to-do lists on index cards that he always carries with him, subscribing to the mantra of out of sight, out of mind.

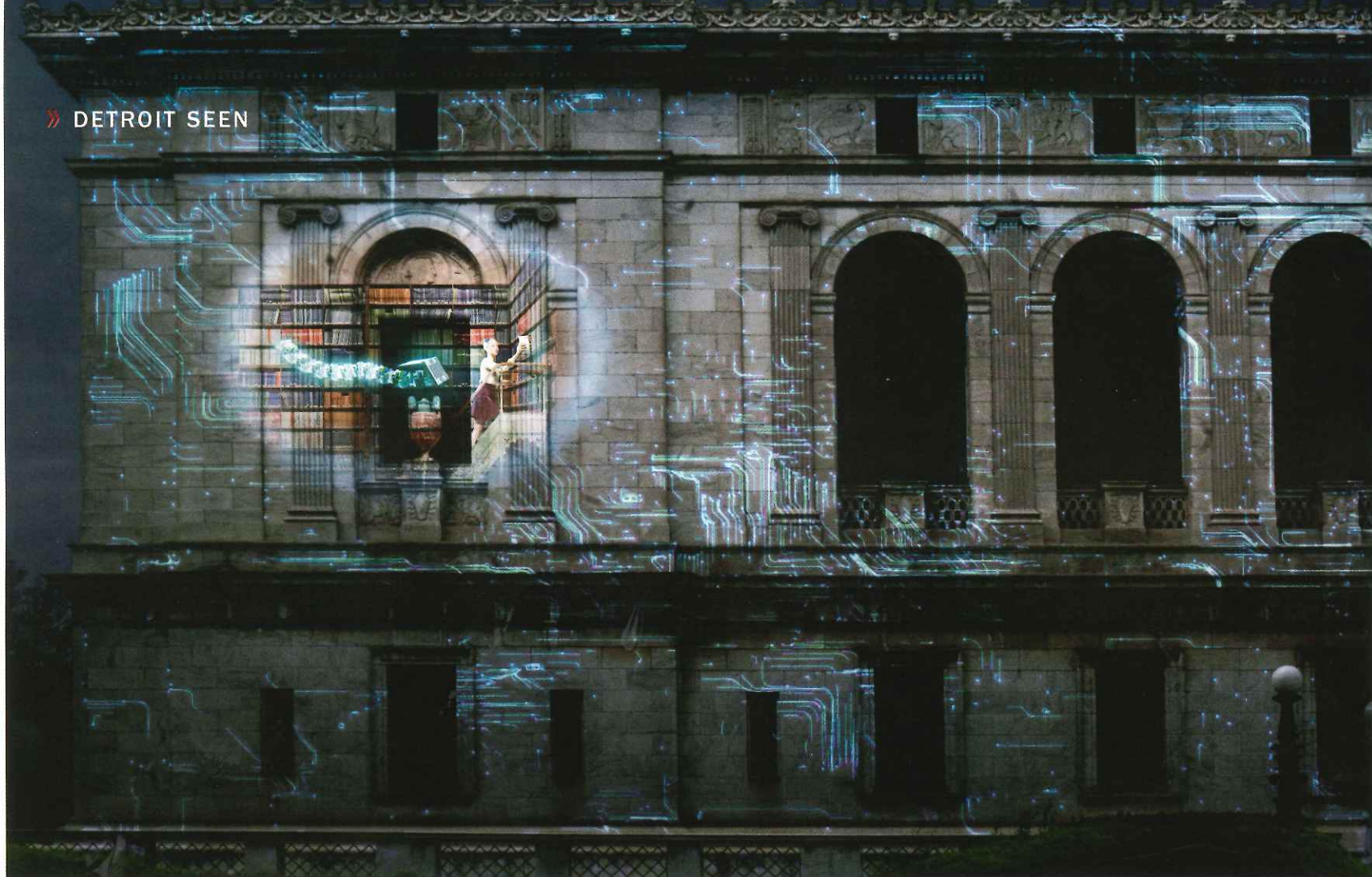
But what Marc Schwartz really is no one can dispute: a full-time Detroit arts ambassador and advocate.

"For the past five years, I've spent 150 percent of my time on arts, culture and design initiatives in Detroit," says Schwartz, who actively sits on eight nonprofit boards and at least eight other committees. "I made a proactive decision to throw myself into making a difference in Detroit and making this city what we always hoped it would be."

Part of his daily ritual includes his three passion projects: the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), where Schwartz is on the board and chairs the Collections Committee; Ponyride in Corktown, where he co-chairs the artist and creative manufacturing collective of individuals and startup businesses; and Dlectricity, a spectacular outdoor light festival that he co-founded in 2010 and will be held this year Sept. 22-23.

"They're part of my DNA," says Schwartz, a preeminent collector of contemporary works on paper, focusing on pop art, post-WWII German artists and African American artists. "Dlectricity started as a grassroots movement, along with a remarkable partnership with Midtown Detroit Inc., to continue to move the arts scene forward."

Schwartz, along with eight other art experts, has selected 40 of the top light installation and interactive design artists from all over the world to participate this



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year. The projects will include video art installations, lasers, performance art and 3D video mapping that will spotlight the exteriors and grounds of the DIA, Wayne State University, College for Creative Studies, MOCAD and Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

“I’m not a big coffee drinker, but I can tell you that the best place to meet for discussions and decision-making is a coffee shop,” says Schwartz, who counts Anthology at Ponyride, Astro Coffee in Corktown, Trinosophes in Eastern Market, Oloman Cafe in Hamtramck and Commonwealth in Birmingham as his favorite brainstorming spots.

Sipping his one morning cup of black Anthology coffee, Schwartz pores over news and emails starting at 5:30 a.m.; he still gets the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* delivered, and the rest — *Crain’s Detroit Business*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Detroit News* and several art journals, he reads online religiously.

“I’m blessed that I only need five-and-a-half hours of sleep,” the ultimate time manager says. “But in the last few weeks, I’ve decided that my life has gotten too complicated so I figured that if I simplified my surroundings and made a quieter space, then that would help simplify my brain and be more peaceful.”

In the middle of the night, long before his girlfriend, Emily Camiener, and her two sons awoke

in their Birmingham home, Schwartz removed six original prints from one wall, spackled the holes and re-hung only two.

“I am the luckiest guy in the world. I’ve been able to pursue my passion unbridled, and Emily has been incredibly supportive during my journey. For me, having a happy productive life is about 70 percent routines that give me pleasure. Then 30 percent is available for adventure and exploring new things,” he said.

His adventure with Ponyride started 11 years ago when Schwartz struck up an “immediate kinship” with Ponyride founder Phillip Cooley, who now co-chairs the Ponyride board of directors with Schwartz. Cooley and his wife, Kate Bordine, bought the 30,000-square-foot building when it was in foreclosure and turned it in to a woodworking shop, dance studio/rehearsal space and home to 70 Michigan-made companies, nonprofits, artists and designers. Tenants, who pay very low rent, include the Detroit Public Theatre, Empowerment Plan, Cinetopia, Alternative for Girls, Designer Christian Birky/Lazlo, Detroit Beard Balm, Floyd Detroit, Vector Lab, Naturalicious, the Lip Bar and many more.

“We want people who make things, entrepreneurs and artists who represent Detroit and have a social mission,” said Ponyride Director Noah Elliott Morrison, who is also a photographer and film-

maker. “Our goal is to help them succeed. That’s the magic of this place. Our tenants have been bold, brave and committed to the city.”

Free tours of Ponyride are offered on Wednesdays at 2 p.m. and, more often than not, Schwartz will be your personal tour guide.

“We’re really creative at reusing space. We even have a convertible art gallery for pop-up exhibitions,” Schwartz says. “We want Ponyride to be sustainable; and the space is created to suit the person’s needs. It really occurs organically.”

As did Art Detroit Now, dating back to 2006 when Schwartz and 10 others — many of whom he still volunteers with on Dlectricity — got together to help promote and increase awareness of contemporary art happenings in Metro Detroit.

“Several things resonated. By sitting down and working together, we knew we would have a bigger outreach,” Schwartz says.

To date, 90-plus organizations now collaborate on exhibitions, events and programs including the Detroit Gallery Crawl, Detroit Gallery Guide, co-op advertising and the weekly ArtDetroitNow.com e-newsletter, which Schwartz directly oversees.

The tech stuff of producing ArtDetroitNow.com he leaves to the gurus. But when all is said and done, Schwartz continues to strive for simplicity in his life. That, and a lofty goal of no more than 10 emails left in his in-box at day’s end, an artistic endeavor indeed. **NS**