

Art Trolleys ‘Graduate’ to Downtown Hotel Hub: Gallery Night Providence has a new home

The trolley shuttle service of Gallery Night Providence has a new launching point — one that may give even more visibility to the city’s free art tour.

Last year, Gallery Night trolleys picked up and dropped off at Regency Plaza Apartments in Providence; they’ll now be rolling up Dorrance Street to the front door of the Graduate Providence hotel, formerly the Biltmore, to usher art enthusiasts to local galleries, museums and cultural events.

Alyssa Ann Heller, Gallery Night coordinator, says she sees the change of venue as a win for program visibility, as well as easier access.

“Being at the Graduate,” Heller says, “we’re also able to do more walking tours and more biking tours in the nicer weather. We’ll be able to introduce people to a wider variety of galleries downtown.”

Gallery Night’s partnership with the Graduate reflects, Heller says, a synergy of local businesses that benefits the arts and Providence as a whole.

A spokesperson for the Graduate Providence attested to the hotel’s excitement at partnering with Gallery Night: “We’re proud to be supporting Providence’s robust arts community by providing a welcoming home base. We encourage [Gallery Night] attendees to utilize the free trolley pick-up, conveniently located right outside our front doors, and stay with us to experience the locally inspired artwork we have right here in our hotel.”

This coming March, Gallery Night begins its 24th year of operation, with approximately two dozen galleries expected to participate.

Founded as a non-profit in 1996 by artists Paula Martiesian and Teresa Level with gallery owner Cathy Bert, Gallery Night Providence takes place on the third Thursday of every month from March to November. At no cost and with no need for pre-registration, people can board a trolley for a gallery tour or, if they choose, take self-guided tours.

Part of the goal of Gallery Night, says Heller, is to make art galleries and museums more accessible to the general public. You don't need an art degree to attend Gallery Night, Heller notes, and the evening won't conclude with a quiz: "You don't need any art experience, or even know what primary colors mean."

Instead, says Heller, Gallery Night is an informal, relaxed way to meet people, interact with artists and gallery owners, and experience the vibrant cultural life of the capital city.

"I consider art to be successful if it sparks a conversation," Heller says. "If you have something to say, then the art was successful."

While Gallery Night Providence officially begins in March, the organization will hold an inaugural fundraising event on Saturday, Feb 29, from 2 - 6pm at Sprout CoWorking in Rising Sun Mills (166 Valley St., Building 6M, Providence). People of all ages are welcome to come, free of charge, to meet artists and gallery owners and enjoy live music.

For more information about Gallery Night Providence, visit their website at gallerynight.org