

More than a feast for the eyes

Canstruction feeds people and community spirit

By Candice Ball

Although it would be easy to mistake Calgary's Canstruction project for an Andy Warhol tribute, the giant art sculptures composed of canned food will be more than a feast for the eyes—this pop art will literally feed Calgary's hungry.

Canstruction, a design-build competition, challenges local architects, designers and builders to create spectacular sculptures using canned foods as the building blocks. Ranging in size from 1,000 to 13,000 cans, teams create the huge structures by stacking cans of various shapes and sizes and using the product labels as the colour palette.

After construction, the structures will be critiqued by a jury and then exhibited for public viewing. Following "de-canstruction," all the food will go to the Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank.

"This is significant because it's the first time the official event has come to Calgary," says Amanda Condie, chair of Canstruction Calgary. "There are about 50 other cities participating across North America, including Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax."

Condie learned about Canstruction quite by accident. After reading about the Vancouver

competition in an industry publication, she approached her employer, Fluor Canada, an EPC company, about bringing the event to Calgary. They immediately jumped on board.

"Canstruction mirrors what Fluor and others in the design-build industry do every day—project execution," she explains. "You have to design your structure, overcome any engineering challenges you might encounter, buy your materials and, ultimately, build it. It's doing what EPC and architectural firms do every day, but for a good cause."

Founded in 1993 by Cheri Melillo, Canstruction has grown from a New York-based competition for the Society for Design Administration and the American Institute of Architects to an international competition for the design and construction industry.

Held in conjunction with Alberta's National Engineering and Geoscience Week, the competition also adopted the week's theme—"Celebrating Innovation." Actual construction will take place on Feb. 24 at Art Central, located in downtown Calgary.

As with all competitions, there are rules. For instance, while there is no limit on the number of people who can plan and design the sculpture, only five builders may handle the cans for the sculpture within the official competition 10 by 10 area at any one time. Those five people can change or hand-off to fresh team members. That means a team of 15 could work in three shifts.

Before the public grand opening, the participants' giant sculptures will be honoured at an awards ceremony. Using Canstruction's established categories—Best Meal, Best Use of Labels, Structural Ingenuity and Jurors' Favourite—a local jury will select the winning entries.

The winning sculptures will be photographed and entered in the Annual National Canstruction Awards, which will be

held in Los Angeles in May 2006. Photographs of past winning entries can be viewed at www.canstruction.com

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"We're very excited about the event," says Condie. "We've had an overwhelming response from Calgary's engineering community, and we're getting support from companies such as Calgary Co-op and GreatEvents Catering. It's a must-see event."

From Feb. 26 to March 4, Calgarians can check out the canned art at Art Central—located at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Centre Street South. On March 5, the teams will "de-canstruct" their sculptures and donate the "materials" to the Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank. ■



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