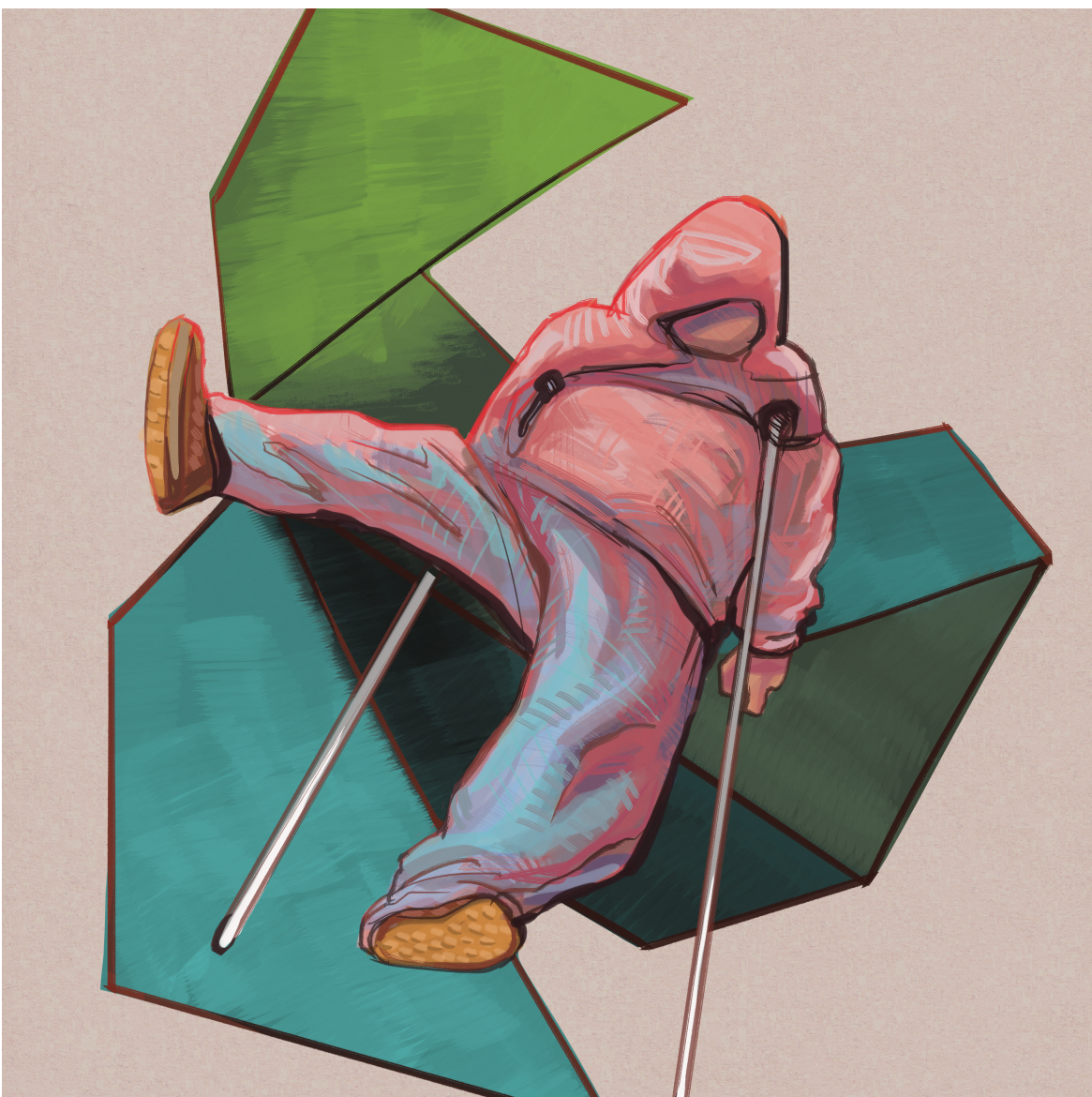




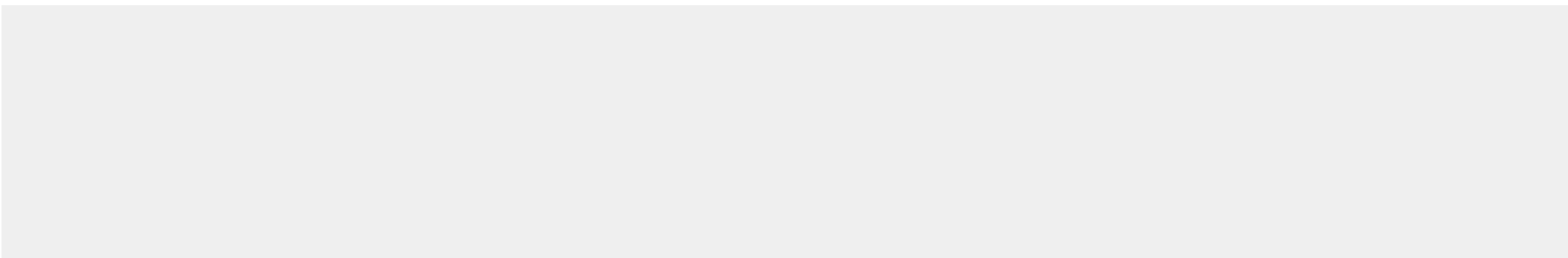
Accessing art

The Soapbox Series is starting the conversation

TOPICS: Accessibility



Hip hop/breakdance artist Bill Shannon will perform during the Soapbox Series. Graphic by Bram Keast.



BY MEG CRANE SEPTEMBER 22, 2014

The arts aren’t always accessible for people with disabilities.

Sometimes audience members can’t see a play because of flights of stairs. Other times, artwork is seen as therapeutic art rather than professional art. Sometimes, audience members feel uncomfortable, or even sick, watching someone in a wheelchair perform on stage.

Arts & Disability Network Manitoba chair Susan Lamberd hopes to make a big leap toward increasing accessibility with the Soapbox Series, beginning Oct. 2.

The organization puts on an event every year in the fall.

“This year we decided that we wanted to see where the needs lie, not only with artists with disabilities, but the art community and the disability community and the public,” says Lamberd.

Four events will be held: two workshops and two panel discussions.

Project leader Brennan Smith says the artists involved include director, playwright, and actor Debbie Patterson, and musician Angel Calnek. At the final event, hip-hop/breakdancer Bill Shannon will perform his own style of dance using crutches.

“We’re hoping that people, through a roundtable discussion process, will identify what they think the needs are in the community to make the arts more accessible,” says Smith.

The event isn’t about educating or talking to people, it’s just about having conversations.

At the end of the series, organizers will discuss what they learned from people who attended the events, says Lamberd.

“We’re not expecting a perfect place, an ultimate goal. We’re hoping that this leads to mutual understanding that there is work to be done,” says Lamberd.

She says once people realize that there are barriers, they can start discussing how to get rid of them.

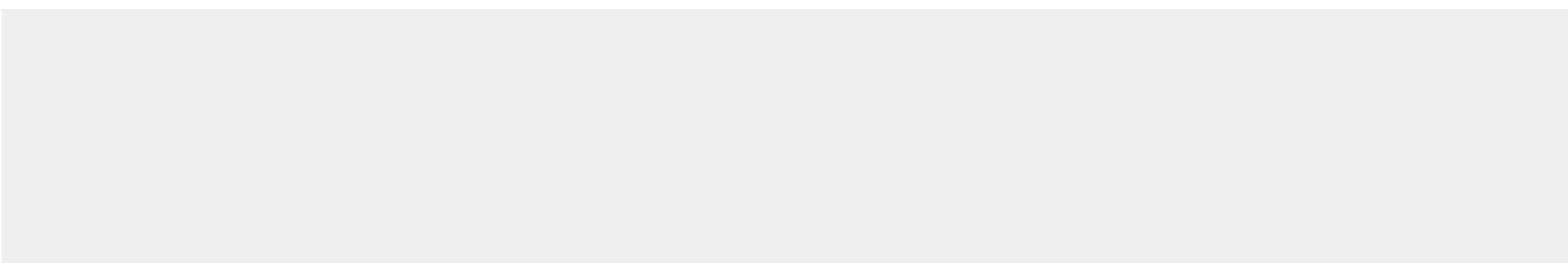
“People may start to work towards crashing those barriers down,” says Lamberd.

All the events of the Soapbox Series are taking place in spaces that are representative of the types of accessible spaces the Arts & Disability Network Manitoba would like to see more of. Each event is also free.

“Everybody will be able to come and join in all of the events,” says Lamberd. And that’s exactly what they hope will happen.

Lamberd notes there is limited space so people should register ahead of time.

Save your spot at an event at [adnm.ca](#) or by emailing [info@adnm.ca](#)



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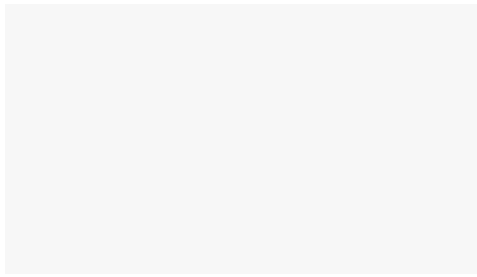
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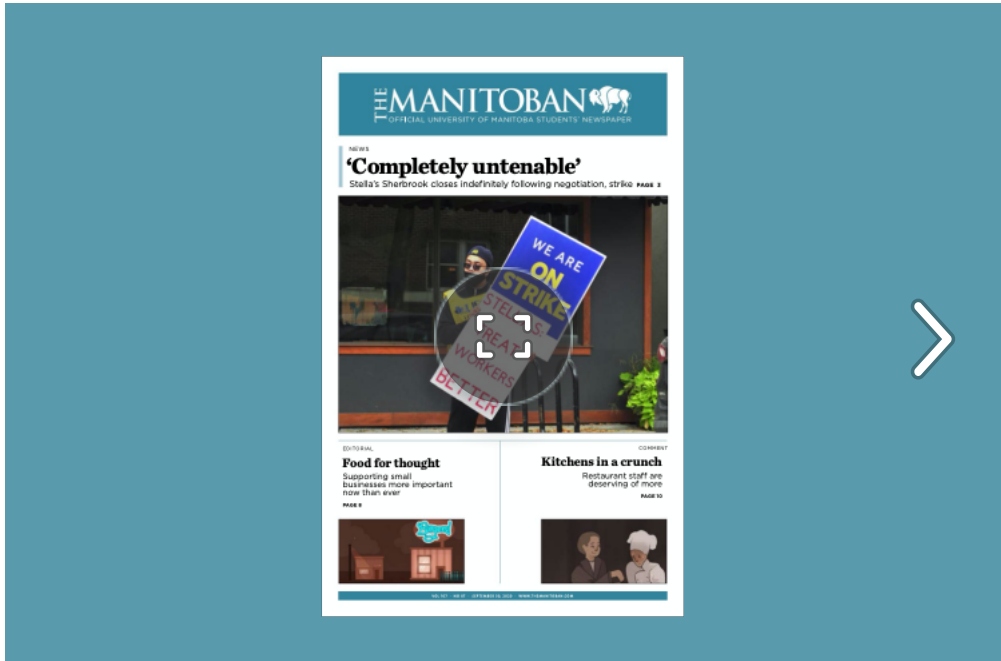
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