

# THE CIRCUS

## Creative arts collaborative will present "Sideshow"

By Terry Morris  
Staff Writer

DAYTON — The Dayton Circus was born a year ago in a burst of creativity, optimism, weirdness, innocence, fun and artistic license called "The Sideshow."

A few weeks ago, at 10:15 p.m. on a Friday in a downtown loft, the collective produced a child — a plaster infant, actually — which descended from the ceiling in a shower of confetti during a performance art piece by a primal male and female (Adam Elfers and Laurana Wong) called "1+1=1."

Spectators near the stage were each handed a strand linking them to the newborn and its parents as if to say, "We're all connected."

That's the Circus, short for the Dayton Circus Creative Collective — still in its infancy, yet challenging the notion that Dayton is dying and nobody is doing anything about it.

Their next proactive rebuttal will come Friday and Saturday during "Sideshow II," a rambunctious, lively, odd, stimulating showcase of performance, art, music, visuals, inventions and connections that are hard to categorize.

Some will flop. Some will leave spectators wondering, "What?" But, given past samples, such as the group's evening-length "Straight From the Hand Connected to the Brain" in May during downtown's last Urban Nights event, some will be very cool.

Friday night's show at The Cannery will be one of many destinations for the next Urban Nights. Another will be the Dayton Arcade, which will be open to the public that night for the first time in a long time.

Far more area residents are familiar with the Arcade than they are with the Circus, which bears a whiff of the underground in a city blessed with traditional arts.

Wong, an electrical engineer who quit her job more than a year ago to launch the group, will unveil her latest work of "performance art and life art" at 10:45 p.m. Friday and 8 p.m. Saturday.

She declined to say anything about it besides the fact that she's "working on a contraption. I like to surprise people." She emerged from a cocoon in one of her performances.

Wong's more forthcoming about how the Circus has developed in the year since she put out a call for artists around downtown Dayton to take

part in the first "Sideshow" and "was amazed by the response when 45 people came forward. I've wanted something like this to happen. I want to create a family in which we support each other and join together to make something bigger than ourselves. I would also love to see the day come when we can be paid for what we do," she said.

The Circus accepts donations and raises money through monthly performances at the downtown club The Pearl, but it's a hand-to-mouth existence that requires using borrowed space for shows, such as the one last spring at the Excelsior Building on Sixth Street.

While potential loft buyers there sipped wine and listened to sales pitches on the ground floor, members of the Circus were doing things such as swimming through flour, cementing feet to the floor, body painting and butoh dance for a different crowd in the raw open space of the third floor.

Artist/performers included Heather Lea Reid and Tadashi, David Kenworthy, Katie Anible, Tyler Peffley, Jason Nein, Concrete Artery, Ren Cummings, Matt Randolph and Liz Landis.

One of the group's stated goals is to acquire a downtown home of its own, a subject that triggered debate during a recent monthly meeting in the Front Street studio of artist and dancer Patricia Kambitsch that was called to order with drumming.

"We need a home base where we can experiment. That's the piece of the arts community that's missing in Dayton," said treasurer Mark Jeffers, an information technology consultant.

He said his personal motivation isn't to make art. It's to make Dayton "the kind of place where high school and college students move after they graduate. They want to go someplace cool. They're leaving now."

Board member Kate Ervin wondered if making the quest for a permanent home a prominent part of the Circus mission statement would "draw attention and energy from who we are now. We're doing outstanding things now. Our goal is connect with people, not to stand apart on our own."

"The Circus is waxing. It's waning. It's taking a natural progression," Wong said.

"But we are making an impact, and that's beautiful."

Contact this reporter at (937) 225-2377 or [tmorris@DaytonDailyNews.com](mailto:tmorris@DaytonDailyNews.com).



Photos of past Circus events and artwork contributed by Dayton Circus