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WHO: Austin Details Art + Photo—with Congress Avenue Arts Destinations

WHAT: I Art Congress: Discover what's up in the *heart* of downtown

WHERE: Congress Avenue from the Capital Building to Lady Bird Lake

WHEN: February 10, 2011 from 6 – 9 pm, then every 2nd Thursday

WEB: www.iartcongress.com

COST: Free

**Collective of Congress Avenue Cultural Destinations Band Together
For “I Art Congress” a New, Monthly Series of Themed Open House Experiences
Discover what’s up in the heart of downtown—every 2nd Thursday**

Promotional support by the Downtown Austin Alliance

AUSTIN, Texas—Those looking for ways to discover the many cultural offerings of Congress Avenue now have a fantastic way to indulge that curiosity. An informal collective of Congress Avenue museums and galleries—led by Austin Details Art + Photo and with promotional support by the Downtown Austin Alliance—has formed to create a new monthly series of themed, open house experiences called: *I Art Congress*. The free series is open to all and launches on February 10 with "Love 101."

For singles and couples, professionals and empty-nesters, locals and visitors that want to round out their plans for Valentine’s Day, “**Love 101**” aims to provide a fun way to do that. Whether participants aim to please a special someone or themselves, the inaugural *I Art Congress* event on Thursday the 10th will provide fun and interactive ways to celebrate and prepare. People can see artwork about love and loss, try their hand at writing poetry, shop for that very special someone, sample chocolates, or maybe seek out a missed connection. And the idea is open for interpretation. Some initial activities include:

- *Red*, a spoken word event at Austin Museum of Art, explores the intense emotions and fine lines between love, anger, and passion. From 7-8 pm, poet Jena Gessaman collaborates with special guests to interpret the color red. Ruby lips and hearts’ sirens scream fire engine red. Then Gessaman presents *Poet for Hire* from 8-9 pm as she creates personalized Poems on the Spot using her 1970 Olivetti Studio 45 typewriter.
- Mexic-Arte will feature passionate Flamenco music and Spanish wine to honor 1930s tile artist Fernando Ramos, featured in the current exhibition *Colors on Clay*.
- Authenticity Gallery will have Austin artist, Brandon Testa on hand with a special selection of his artwork—some of which feature hidden and not so hidden hearts. He is doing a special wall for the night for Valentine’s Day.
- Austin Details Art + Photo presents *The Tiny Show: Tiny Art for Big Hearts* opening February 10, just in the nick of time to dazzle your sweetheart with a tiny jewel of original art for Valentine's Day, with some sweet entertainment and sweet treats to put us all in a romantic mood.
- The Paramount Theatre presents film director, screenwriter, author and journalist Nora Ephron whose work includes films like *When Harry Met Sally*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, *You've Got Mail*, and her latest, *Heartburn*, you won't want to miss this award-winning Leading Lady as she shares her work and journey in the intimate Paramount setting. Tickets required at www.austintheatre.org
- Paul Ha, Director of Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis will speak in the Community Room at Arthouse starting at 7 pm.
- Champion Contemporary presents a gallery talk by Erin Curtis and guided tour of her recently opened exhibition - *Ornament of Savage Tribes*
- Ad firm Swizzle Collective will be hosting a Valentine cocktails recipe contest/sampling with a very special ingredient, location TBA

The founding partners of *I Art Congress* are seeking Congress corridor businesses and those interested in programming on the avenue. "The possibilities are endless," says Jann Alexander, owner of Austin Details Art + Photo who initiated the idea. "While we each call Congress home, we really see it as a cultural canvas reflective of



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the larger city and its creative spirit. We challenge Austin's businesses, performers, entrepreneurs, big-thinkers, performance artists, theatrical types, creatives, dancers, anyone who wants to celebrate Congress Ave and artists to help us shape the experience, one night a month, of walking down the main street of the coolest city in the world."

Businesses and individuals interested in getting involved can email info@wyattbrand.com

I Art Congress is meant to showcase the avenue in a fun, participatory, easy, and consolidated way so that people can discover the broad variety of arts, entertainment, dining, shopping, and nightlife that's happening on Congress Avenue day and night, 7 days a week. The founding arts organizations behind *I Art Congress* are Austin Details Art + Photo, Arthouse at the Jones Center, Austin Museum of Art, Austin Creative Alliance, Authenticity Gallery, and Mexic-Arte Museum.

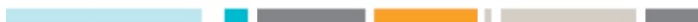
History of Congress Avenue

Edwin Waller, the first mayor of Austin, designed Congress Avenue to be Austin's most prominent street and he succeeded. In 1839, he was chosen by Texas President Mirabeau Lamar to survey the site, sell lots, and erect public buildings for the new state capital in Austin. The fourteen-block grid plan was bisected by a broad north-south thoroughfare, Congress Avenue, running up from the river to Capital Square, where the new Texas State Capitol was to be constructed. Early structures along Congress Avenue included government buildings, hotels, saloons, retail stores and restaurants. By the late 1840s the Avenue formed a well-established business district. The mid-1870s introduced gaslight illumination and mule-driven streetcars as well as construction of a new Travis County courthouse at Eleventh Street.

The present Texas Capitol at the north end of Congress Avenue was built in 1888. The original dirt street was bricked in 1910. Trolley cars operated on the Avenue until 1940. Before Interstate 35 was completed in the 1960s, Congress Avenue was the primary road to reach Austin from the south. Certain landmarks such as the Austin Motel identify the road as a major thoroughfare for travelers through the mid-20th century. Today, the grand avenue is lined with a mixture of historic and modern structures that house over 60 restaurants, shops, museums, galleries, coffee shops, lounges, and service businesses—providing for the many office buildings, condos, and even private residences on Congress.

About Austin Details Art + Photo:

Austin's new downtown gallery is an interactive, energetic, creative experience where art creators and art enthusiasts connect. Original art and photography is dynamically presented on our 17' walls, on our 58" new media HDTV display with continuous slide shows and videos, in our thematic group shows, on our 12 x 12 Wall for local-area emerging artists. Our exhibits, creative workshops, art talks and films, and pro services for photographers and artists (including fine art archival printing), attract a creative audience and the energy is contagious. Austin Details Art + Photo is also home to the on-going Vanishing Austin photography series by founder and director Jann Alexander. www.austindetailsart.com





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