

TEN LOCAL REASONS TO BRAVE THE WINTER WEATHER!

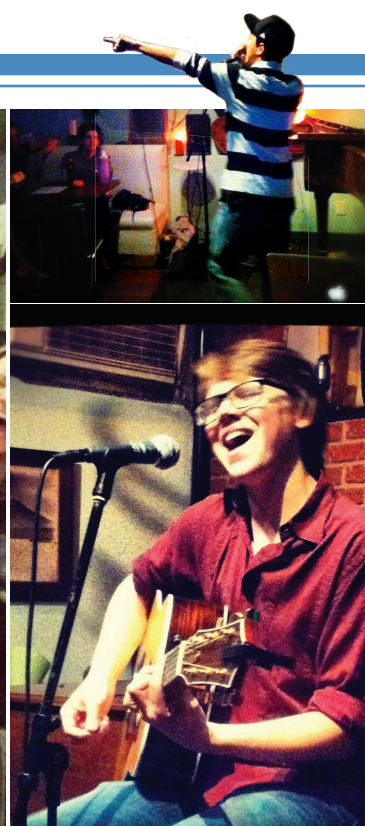
by Audrey Dimola

We know how easy it is to slip into sweet, sweet hibernation mode when you're faced with freezing rain, apocalyptic snowfall, or just plain cold – but not this time! Here's a few fun local reasons to see something besides your laptop, television screen, or apartment walls this winter, and maybe, just maybe, even get a head-start on some New Year's resolutions.



GO ICE SKATING

This one's a no-brainer! Grab some friends and enjoy this classic chilly pastime in two ways right here in Queens – and without getting stuck in an overcrowded tourist trap. You can try skating in a bubble at NYC's only rooftop rink, City Ice Pavilion, located right off the 7 train in Long Island City/Sunnyside (47-32 32nd Pl), or take the 7 a bit further down the line to the World Ice Arena in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park (131-35 Avery Ave). Both rinks are open everyday, offer private lessons (if you want to get fancy), hockey programs (if you want to get rowdy), and special rates for groups and parties. In general, aside from any spills you take on the ice, it's minimal damage – both rinks are just \$5 on weekdays, \$8 on weekends/holidays, and \$5 for skate rentals.



ATTEND (OR SIGN UP FOR) AN OPEN MIC

What's better than an open mic? A multi-genre local open mic that fosters true creative community. Cozy and comfy yet well-equipped, Waltz-Astoria (23-14 Ditmars Blvd) has been running its open mic for the past seven years, currently on Tuesday and Wednesday nights (sign up at 7:30pm, show at 8pm), and it shows no signs of slowing down. Actors, singers, writers, comics, musicians, spoken word artists, and more step up to what is usually a packed house, but always a supportive crowd. Proprietors Song and Pedro Gonzalez have enjoyed seeing countless individuals either continue growing as artists or begin their careers on the Waltz stage, so why not join the family and go on next? If you're not into performing you can just show up to support, and most likely come away with a fuzzy feeling of pride for – quite possibly – your new favorite people. Drinks (alcoholic and non), sandwiches, and treats available, too.



TRY SOME HOT YOGA (OR HOT VINYASA, OR HOT PILATES...)

If you truly loathe the cold and would rather commune with your fellow yogis instead of a lonely treadmill, perhaps you should consider trying the several hot class options at The Yoga Room in Astoria (38-01 35th Ave) and LIC (10-14 47th Rd). Hot classes like Hot Yoga (featuring Bikram-style 26 postures), Hot Yoga Flow (which mixes in additional postures), Hot Vinyasa (a dynamic flowing practice), and "Hot Bodies" Hot Pilates take place in a room heated from 95 to 105 degrees, so it's kind of like exercising in a sauna. The higher temperature increases blood flow and burns calories while sweating out toxins and aiding in flexibility. It's an experience like no other, but if you're not into the added kick of extra heat or would rather work up to it, The Yoga Room offers many other options for yoga and Pilates students of all levels, seven days a week, in both locations.

ACTIVITIES



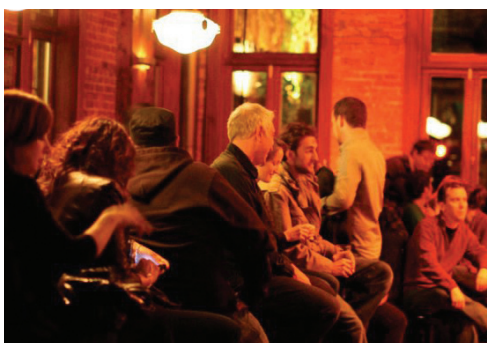
GET HANDS ON

No, we're not going to play you "Unchained Melody," but we are absolutely going to recommend you get involved in the lovely multicultural community at the spacious BrickHouse Ceramic Art Center (10-34 44th Dr) in LIC. Anyone at any skill level can walk through their doors and benefit from meeting new people, developing or

honing their skills, and spending time crafting art with their bare hands – which, in this increasingly fast-paced world, is really quite special and relaxing to take part in. A full range of classes are available during the day or evening, and students can learn to make functional pottery (like plates, cups, bowls, etc.) or sculpture at vari-

ous levels, from beginners up through advanced students and professional artists. BrickHouse director Ellen E. Day also organizes the yearly Clay Fest (which you should look out for in 2013), a citywide open studios event in which people all over NYC can get well-acquainted with the vibrant ceramic community that exists here.

ENJOY SOME LIVE MUSIC



Our borough isn't blessed with traditional music venues, but thanks to some enterprising locals that's never stopped us from making it work. Queens classic LIC Bar (45-58 Vernon Blvd), with its original tin ceilings and antique wood, has always been a welcome haven for standout sounds. You've got four days a week (Sat, Sun, Mon, and Wed) to grab a brew or just enjoy the evening, featuring local Queens and NYC talent alongside national acts and top-notch curated showcase nights with various themes – including "Queens of Queens" featuring original lady-musicians from the borough - dedicated John Lennon and Elvis tributes, or a rollicking Rolling Stones cover night. Did we mention there's a private carriage house out back with its own fireplace?! And lucky for you, starting in the new year LIC Bar's popular fireside reading series (think ghost stories, classic radio programs, and live musical accompaniment) will make a much-anticipated return.

RUN AWAY WITH THE CIRCUS

Here's the part where childhood dreams, restless adulthood, or ambitious new year's resolutions come into play. If you've ever wanted to train like a circus star – soar through the air on the flying trapeze, balance and tumble like an acrobat, scale flowing aerial silks to dizzying heights – then LIC's Circus Warehouse (53-21 Vernon Blvd) is your new playground. Founded by Suzi Winson, Gino Farfan, and Michelle Arvin, the 8,000-square-foot space with its towering 30-foot tall ceilings and full trapeze rig will excite athletic practitioners and performance enthusiasts of all sorts. Beginners and drop-ins are welcome but it's easy to get addicted, and because the Warehouse offers classes taught by actual circus pros, their homegrown stars have gone on to work with major productions around the world. If you've got the gumption (and the tights) – this could be you!

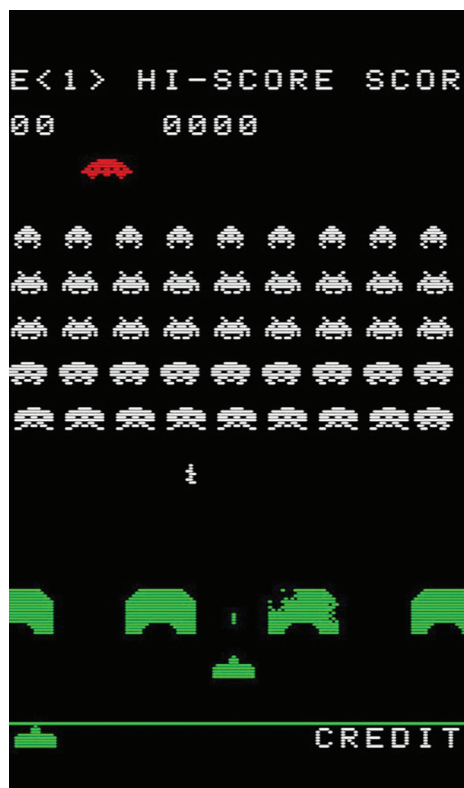
BRING ART TO YOURSELF AND/OR YOUR KIDS

Did you know that there's a conservatory for music and art nestled in the ground floor of a building on a main Astoria drag? Multi-talented couple Jane and Micah Burgess founded Art House Astoria (23-35 Broadway) as a nurturing space for both children and adults to stretch their creative wings with music, dance, writing, and visual art. There's something for nearly every age bracket to try – tots 6 months to 2 years can rock and roll with their parents to themed classes like 90s grunge and glam rock; 3 to 4 year olds can learn basic music theory by playing on Little Red Pianos; and kids 9 to 15 can realize their *Glee* fantasies by singing and dancing in Show Choir. Both you and your kids can take individual guitar or

painting/drawing classes, and adults can get a little creative writing in as well. Art House also hosts an open mic night and a faculty cabaret, but for full info on programs give them a call or check their Facebook.



PLAY VIDEO GAMES IN A MUSEUM?!



Celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first digital video game by literally playing your way through a history of gaming at Astoria's own Museum of the Moving Image (36-01 35th Ave). Their *Spacewar! Video Games Blast Off* exhibition is comprised of more than 20 playable (!) games ranging in platform, genre, and developer. Full-size arcade versions of Space Invaders and Asteroids, Yar's Revenge on Atari 2600, Galaga '91 on Game Gear, Star Fox on Super Nintendo, on up through Halo 4 on Xbox 360, and of course a playable simulation of Spacewar! on a model PDP-1 computer...what are you waiting for?! Special programs relating to Spacewar! will also run while the exhibition is on view, and after you mash buttons for awhile don't forget to geek out over the rest of this one-of-a-kind museum's kaleidoscopic displays, multimedia, and cinematic memorabilia.

GET YOUR DRINK ON - WINTER STYLE

Take your usual booze cruise off autopilot and mix it up with some wintry drinks that are sure to combat the chill in your bones. If you're in Astoria, pop by Sweet Afton (30-09 34th St) for a classic spiked hot cider with your choice of spiced rum, bourbon, or apple brandy, or stop in Pachanga Patterson (33-17 31st Ave) to snag a Canelazo, a traditional Colombian beverage made of panela (sugarcane) and water boiled with cinnamon – it's

typically served with Aguardiente (firewater) but can alternatively be paired with your choice of brandy or spiced rum. If you'd like to give LIC a try, Manducatis Rustica (46-33 Vernon Blvd) offers an egg nog martini (with vanilla vodka), a caramel kiss (with caramel vodka, marshmallow, and Godiva), in addition to good ol' hot toddies and several varieties of hot cocoa that are perfect to cozy up to their fireplace with.



AND FINALLY... HAVE A SNOW DAY!



Yes, we said it! Should global warming relinquish its dreaded grasp and grant us a generous dusting or a nutsy blizzard this season, please heed this last piece of advice: drop the shovel, stop grumbling for at least a few hours, and give yourself permission to have some fun. Romp around in sprawling Astoria Park, careen down the big hills in LIC's Rainey Park on a sled, smash someone in the face with a snowball... Yup. You're welcome. *It's Queens*