Cultural Daily

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Whimsical light for a darkening world

R. Daniel Foster · Wednesday, December 12th, 2018

Splashing a bit of light on a darkening planet has forever been the favored way to approach the winter solstice, the year's longest night. Adding to that tradition is the L.A. County Arboretum's Moonlight Forest Magical Lantern Art Festival. It runs through January 6, 2019.

It's astounding what a whole lot of fabric stretched over frames, and lit from within by thousands of LED lights, can produce. In this case, everything from dinosaur herds, an entire Serengeti of African wonderfulness, and deep-sea tunnels wreathed by effervescent octopuses, whales, and jellyfish.

A 30-foot high dragon is Moonlight Forest's most stunning sight. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Food trucks, dragons, and an entire army of light

There's also a Children's World section strewn with fairy-tale characters and flowers, a stage with Chinese acrobats and dancers, and even the famed Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China – circa 210–209 B.C.

While adults will enjoy the one-mile long spectacle that loops the Arboretum (allow at least an hour), children will especially be mesmerized by the voluminous splashes of light and color.

There are also food trucks – and a 30-foot-high dragon reflected in the arboretum lake, perhaps the event's most stunning sight.

A house-size peacock is found at the arboretum's Moonlight Forest. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Plenty of peacocks

Peacocks predominate here, a symbol of the Ming Dynasty. The bird represented beauty, power, and dignity, among other attributes. Don't miss the one that's as big as a house (how could you). It's fronted by a photo-taking platform, and in fact, several of the sculptural forms include them – the whole lot of lanterns is easy social media catnip. Snap away. But don't touch.

The lantern festival is mastered by Tianyu Arts & Culture, Inc., an American subsidiary of the design and manufacturing firm Sichuan Tianyu, headquartered in Zigong, China.

Moonlight Forest has trails lined with lanterns and trippy flowers, among other designs. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Winter light displays set within public gardens are a bit of a trend. For three years, La Cañada Flintridge's Descanso Gardens has hosted "Enchanted: Forest of Light." Instead of lanterns, the various art installations are powered by pixel mapping.

Moonlight Forest Magical Lantern Art Festival

Hours: Wednesday – Sunday: 5:30 pm to 10:00 pm

Entry times: 5:30 pm, 7:00 pm, 8:00 pm (closes at 10:00 pm)

Cost: Wednesday – Thursday: Adult $25, Children (ages 3-17) $20, Senior (62+) $23

Friday – Sunday: Adult $28, Children (ages 3-17) $23, Senior (62+) $25

Top photo: R. Daniel Foster

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