

Community Comes Together for New LES Mural

A memorial gets a fresh update with the help of local volunteers

By Adam Janos

Walter Holcomb, Lower East Side resident of 35 years, remembers the events of September 11th, 2001 with sobering clarity. For months afterward, memorials sprung up like wildflowers across the five boroughs and beyond.

One such mural on the Lower East Side, the “Celebrating the Heroes of Our City”, was painted in 2002. A 210-foot outdoor fresco by Richard Weinstein and 300 neighborhood children, the painting splayed out across a brick wall at Henry M. Jackson Park, an homage to the first responders who work around the clock to maintain safety in the city that never sleeps.

But while the city’s resolve following the crisis was admirable, the mural representing it eventually faded. Already worn down by years of weather, flood damage from Superstorm Sandy left the work a fading echo of its original glory, and so CITYarts set out to freshen the piece up, tasking the job to local artist Janos Adam Gilewicz.

But times had changed, and to Gilewicz, the old painting felt out-of-date.

“I was presented with the opportunity to restore the original work, or to incorporate new ideas into it. Since eleven years have passed since the original event, and the world has moved, I believed strongly in a new design,” Gilewicz said.

Like the city itself, the new design is inherently more optimistic; floral twin towers have been painted on a starry night sky, and a depiction of One World Trade Center is at the center of the work. That tower – slated to open by early 2014 – was selected as the winning design for the new trade center site in 2005.

As with the original mural, CITYarts and Gilewicz have relied on community volunteers to help get the painting on its feet. The Walt Disney Company, which is helping sponsor



the work, sent volunteers to help paint the piece last Friday.

“Being a true New Yorker, it’s nice to participate in something that brings beauty to the city after such a tragedy,” said Lindsay Deak between brushstrokes.

In keeping with the times (and Disney’s role), the new mural is 3D, and jumps out when viewed with ChromaDepth glasses. Gilewicz claims that the new mural – in which the blue, green, and red paint will jump at different depths to those utilizing ChromaDepth – will be the largest 3D mural in the world.

“I intend to call the Guinness Book of World Records, and let them know,” Gilewicz declared.

For CITYarts Project Coordinator Michelle Mantua, it’s enough just restoring beauty to what had become another neglected public space.

“A big part of our inspiration to restore this mural is to show that this neighborhood that we care,” Mantua said.

Walter Holcomb is receiving the message.

“It gives me inspiration. It means new life to a community.”

	250 Bow
Soho	255 Hud
	40 Mence
	203 Sprin
	17 Thomp
	80 Wood
Tribeca	415 Green
	200 Chas
	250 W
	416 Wash
	50 Frankl
	88 Cham
	200 Cham
	250 W St
	366 Broa
	101 Warr
	200 Cham
	79 Worth
	39 Vestry
	27 North
W Village	167 Perry
	383 W 11
	295 W 11
	45 Chris
	100 Bank
	84 Horat
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