



New Art Installation Revives Wasteland

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The Lower East Side Waterfront Alliance (LESWA) has launched “Paths to Pier 42” to revive the wasteland of Pier 42. The partner organizations in LESWA selected five artists in spring of 2013 to design the art installation with public involvement throughout the summer. The five art pieces were installed and displayed after a celebration on July 20th, 2013.

Pier 42, or “Banana Pier” was abandoned when Dole, a fruit company that mainly imported bananas, departed to Delaware. To gentrify the neighborhood, LESWA drafted “A People’s Plan for the East River Waterfront.” “Paths to Pier 42” is the first step of the plan to use art and public involvement to transform wasted Pier 42 into usable public place.

Five proposals were accepted out of 60 submissions. Nana Debois Buhl’s “Do You Remember the Bananas?” Interboro Partners’ “Rest Stop,” Mary Mattingly’s “Triple Islands,” Chat Travieso’s “On a Fence,” and Jennifer Wen Ma’s “Inked Garden”, which were chosen by a jury of six people, assembled by LESWA.

The Livable Island

“I appreciate doing things in public,” says Mattingly, “I was ecstatic with how much [space] I could take up ... [The art’s] proximity to the river can expand to a new land,” she added.

Mattingly’s art piece “Triple Island” provides a livable land for the future. It will float on the water, due to the barrels underneath, once the sea level rises in the fall. With the assistance of Rand Weeks and “The Spark” Ray, who major in environmental science, the artwork became a display of sustainable systems. The solar generator inside is able to produce 1.5 kilowatts of energy everyday, equal to the amount of energy two people needed to live daily.

Mattingly hopes the piece will be inspirational, having an impact on people who look at it and helping them consider how to make ecosystems more livable.

Though the deadline for the removal of the art is the end of November, Mattingly hopes to develop the art piece and “give it to whoever wants” it or recycle the materials for new art piece.

The Garden Full of Vitality

“I never worked in New York City,” Ma says. She says her project became the opportunity to “work for community here.”

Ma’s “Inked Garden” was completely black on the first day with the painted cover of Chinese black ink over the living plants. Community members water her garden daily. “As the time passes, the garden will change in two ways — the flowers will blossom and the black garden will be transforming to more green color,” she explains.

It is a spiritual way to show how the life of nature goes. “Each life has a decision to make. They always have choices to either succumb to the stress, or survive thriving under it,” she says.

“Before the winter comes, the plants will be adopted by the communities,” Ma says. She will invite people to ask for the plants.

The Fence for Inclusion

Travieso states, “One of the great things about the project is they wanted us to promote with something that was an initial idea ... very much influenced by the community.”

A collaboration with graphic designer Yeju Choi, Travieso’s artwork “On a Fence” seeks to change the chain of fence that separates a bikeway and the Pier 42 site to “something brings people all together” through the creation of an interactive sculpture. One side incorporates signage and color, and inside, there is seating and a playground. This transforms the physical barriers into a place where people can gather and share.

Travieso says that at the end of the art display he hopes to reuse the materials as much as possible or donate them to project like “Paths to Pier 42.”

Looking Forward to the Future

Dylan House, the community design director at Hester Street Collaborative, is leading “Paths to Pier 42” project. He explains that Pier 42 would be a place “to picnic, to do things like in a usual park ... and to give visitors more reasons to come”.

According to House, the project was started last year’s summer. He said State Sen. Daniel Squadron and U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer provided \$14 million to the project and to plan to the future park. Due to Hurricane Sandy, the project has been delayed to this summer. Paths to Pier 42 held a Community Build Day on July 13, a Space Potluck on July 16 and Summer Launch Celebration on July 20.

The art pieces will last until the end of November 2013. House hopes to restore the project for next summer with the same process of “Paths to Pier 42” this year.

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