



Graffiti artists display work on city wall by river

Heather Brookhart / Correspondent

With aerosol spray paint cans and sketches in hand, approximately 90 artists took over the Raritan River Art Walk Wall Saturday afternoon for the Streets2k8 event. Artists from all over came to leave their mark on the wall, covering at least three fourths of the mile-long wall with city-approved graffiti and paintings, said Albus Cavus artist collective co-founder, Peter Krsko.

The event was sponsored by Albus Cavus, the Raices Cultural Center, and the city of New Brunswick. Artists were asked to submit their sketches to the city prior to Saturday's event.

Out of 50 applicants, five artists were chosen to win free art supplies from Sabotaz 80, Liquitex and Winsor & Newton, Krsko said.

The winners were chosen by a panel of judges that included Isabel Nazario of the Office of President of the University, Alfredo Franco of the Zimmerli Art Museum, Carlos Fernandez from the Center for Latino Studies, Executive Director of Albus Cavus Leon Rainbow and Freda Rhodes of New Brunswick Public Schools, he said.

The winning sketches were Aja Washington's piece titled "Paint-Polluted", Paper Monster's "Caught Inbetween," Dmitry Gubin's "The Four Horsemen," Senic's "Heavy Dreams," and Jerry Gant's "Gantalism Abound."

Washington, a student at School of Visual Arts in New York City, said that her painting is an imaginary, colorful landscape, which addresses the issue of pollution.

"I've been kind of trying to look into illustrations and I wanted to tell a story about a certain environment," Washington said.

Washington said that she likes to use acrylic paints and add other elements to it such as glitter.

She said an event like Streets2k8 is just what the city needs in order to have a strong art community.

"It's a way to beautify the community but also bring a lot of the local artists together in a place where they can let their guard down and see what everyone else is doing and talk and network," Washington said, "I think it's great. I'm sorry I didn't find out about it sooner, especially Albus Cavus."

Gubin said that his piece, "The Four Horsemen," which pictures four policemen on horses has an apocalypse theme. Gubin is a painter who usually works on canvas and said that his piece first started out as a painting and then became a mural.

He said Streets2k8 keeps vandalism off the streets and provides people with a place to come and see contemporary and graffiti artists working.

"I think there should be more events like this, it's definitely something that we all need," Gubin said.

Tony Teo, who has been a graffiti artist for about 19 years, said that Streets2k8 keeps people from doing graffiti illegally.

Gus Stevenson, a tattoo artist, painted over his section of the wall with spray paint and then used a stick he found to scrape at the wall and bring out the old paint colors still underneath.

Stevenson said that Streets2k8 is a way for artists to come out and show their talent and a good opportunity for young kids to see art.

"People think that graffiti is just garbage, [but] there is art to it," Stevenson said, "There's a lot of talent out there that should be seen. I'm just happy they're letting us do this."

Meanwhile, upstairs at Deiner Park, music could be heard from behind the river dorms as bands 3 Time Mother, Sailors in Rags, guitarist Dave Tucker and the youth folk dance group Raicitas took to the stage.

Jay Fulmore, the bassist for Sailors in Rags described their music as Americana and a mixture of folk, country and blue grass. The Highland Park-based band is made up of two guitarists, a mandolin and bass, Fulmore said.

Sheila Shukla, a vocalist and mandolin player of the group said that the group has been together since December and plays at Tumulty's and Namaste Caf&ecute; in New Brunswick.

Fulmore said that the group will also be playing at an Obama fundraiser at the George Street Playhouse on Oct. 6.

Manhattan Samba, an authentic Brazilian percussion samba group also performed at the event. The group, which is made up of anywhere from 10 to 30 people, performs primarily in New York City and uses instruments such as bass drums, tamborim, and small snares, said group Augusto Menezes.

The first installation of a sculpture at the Raritan River Art Walk was also unveiled on Saturday. Jonathan Shor was awarded an innovation grant from the Middlesex County Cultural Heritage Commission to build an interactive sculptural installation, Krsko said.

Krsko said that he collaborated with Shor and they worked together to apply for the grant. The sculpture, which is made of blank steel and bricks, will be interactive in the sense that Shor will add more elements to it and artists are invited to come and continually paint over it, Krsko said.

Krsko said the sculpture will be a constant dialogue going on in a public space.

"Jon said, 'This is what I have to say to you through the sculpture, talk to me with your paint.'" Krsko said.

That this kind of interactive art is what Albus Cavus is all about, he said.

"What separates our work from other organizations is that we have very blurry lines between the artist and the audience," Krsko said, "There is not really a passive audience, everybody interacts, everybody is part of the process, everybody is part of the experience and the artists are the audience and the audience are the artists."