



50 Years and Looking Forward

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Phil Cardone
phil@bronxarts.org
718-931-9500 x33
www.bronxarts.org

The Bronx Council on the Arts Takes a Lead Role in Local Beautification

(Bronx – March 21, 2012) The Bronx Council on the Arts (BCA) teamed up with Morris Park leadership and State Senator Jeff Klein this past November in a beautification initiative to bring creativity and pride to the Morris Park neighborhood. With Bronx-based teaching artist Ali Irizarry at the reins, and assistance from student helpers from three neighborhood schools, the plan is now coming to fruition.

The "Best of Morris Park" mural project will transform Amtrak's graffiti-laden railroad overpass at Bronxdale Avenue (off East Tremont Avenue) into a colorful display of the area's past and present. Contributing in a large way will be some of the most imaginative young minds in the community.

Beginning with an art contest this past fall, BCA, Senator Klein, the Morris Park Merchant Alliance and the Morris Park Community Association invited students from local schools to submit their own artistic visions for the project. Seven drawings, ranging from the historic Morris Park Racecourse to the current Columbus Day Parade, were selected to grace the bridge's run-down abutments. Students, under the guidance of Ms. Irizarry, will paint the murals themselves.

Currently working as a teaching artist for New York's Town Hall Foundation, Irizarry has 10 years of experience in creating and implementing visual arts programs. BCA was given the role to find an artist for the project and Irizarry was chosen based on her work at the Lehman College Art Gallery and other Bronx exhibitions.

Irizarry is currently conducting weekly sessions at three schools in the Morris Park area (P.S. 108, St. Clare of Assisi and Van Nest Academy) with the highest submissions, preparing them for the mural painting in April. These sessions are structured to teach the students about the value of the work they will undertake.

"There is a purpose in every piece of Public Art," Irizarry says. "There is also a message. The artist has a social responsibility towards the community. When kids learn about Public Art, their eyes not only open to their surroundings, but their minds begin to question and appreciate the reasoning behind the work."

Irizarry added that given the fact that participating artists will be local children and parents, the project will be a visual example of how art can uplift a whole community's spirit. "When a community works together to beautify their surroundings," she says, "it not only brings pride and personal gratification to the group, it also creates a great feeling of belonging within the group to that community. It is our home and we are taking care of it."

BCA's Executive Director Deirdre Scott agrees in the transformational nature of the project. "This partnership with Senator Klein, Amtrak and Morris Park leaders is an honor," says Scott, "as well as an opportunity to showcase how the arts can raise the profile of a community." BCA has similar plans in the neighboring Westchester Square community, the organization's future home. By sponsoring cultural events including family and professional workshops, as well as expanding its already-existing programs in the area, BCA plans to bring an influx of people into the area, helping to restore the Square's reputation of being a center for cultural and economic activity.

2012 marks BCA's 50th year as a private, non-profit membership organization. It is recognized nationally as a leading arts service organization. Services include financial support to individual artists and non-profits, information services, technical assistance, education and community programming, advocacy, including its Longwood Arts Project – an exhibition gallery and cyber arts program – and the Bronx Writers Center which nurtures the creative and professional development of writers. Visit bronxarts.org for a complete listing of BCA programs and events.

###