

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

PAINTING FOR CITY WALLS

April 17 - June 16, 1969

Wall Label

The undistinguished buildings which make up so much of the New York City environment have one advantage for the artist who wants to work at giant scale; they often present vast blank surfaces which are passed, if not noticed, by thousands of people every day.

Recently several artists, with the enterprising assistance of David Bromberg, an urban planner, have persuaded landlords to let them use blank walls at seven different sites in lower Manhattan, where most of New York's artists live and work. Two other murals have been commissioned for playgrounds in Brooklyn and the Bronx.

Most of the examples shown here are simple in concept, loud in color, and geometrically patterned. Perhaps the most startling results were obtained at 29th Street and Second Avenue. At that site artist Jason Crum transformed two walls on buildings adjacent to a playground designed by Paul Friedberg. Fed into the kaleidoscopic street scene of children at play, pedestrians and automobiles, architecture and non-architecture, such colossal geometric backdrops in red, yellow, blue and white dominate their surroundings and provide a much-needed focus of attention - restful just because they are powerful enough to drown out all distractions.

Sometimes these paintings have prompted the refurbishing of adjacent areas, but their purpose is community improvement in a deeper sense. Mrs. Doris Freedman, who as Director of New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs brought city sponsorship to three of these projects, observes that "these artists wish to establish direct lines of communication with the New York community to end their traditional isolation from the mainstream of civic activity."

Possible transformations of the urban environment that artists could achieve have barely been explored; a few projects have been included in this exhibition. The Kaplan Foundation has given financial assistance so that Mr. Bromberg can continue as coordinator.

(more)

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It costs about \$4,000 to paint one wall; interested citizens alert to a new opportunity in public patronage of the arts should contact Mr. Bromberg: 90 Bedford Street, New York City.

Arthur Drexler
Director
Department of Architecture & Design

The artists and the Museum gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following individuals:

Mr. William Bernhard
Mr. Lawrence Bittenwieser
Mrs. Joan Davidson
Mrs. Ilyana Belle Fatow
Mrs. Doris Freedman
Mrs. Victoria Goldman
Mr. Robert Towbin