



540 President Street, Suite 1A, Brooklyn, NY 11215 | 718.254.9782 | www.groundswellmural.org

Contact:
Sharon Polli (718) 254 9782
sharon@groundswellmural.org
Madeleine LeMieux (718) 254 9782
madeleine@groundswellmural.org
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Mural Unveiling in Sunset Park

Artists Bring Humanity to Traffic Safety with Mural at Major Thoroughfare

Mural Dedication Ceremony: Thursday, August 30 at 11am
Location: C-Town, 760 4th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11232

NEW YORK, NY - Groundswell, in partnership with the New York City Department of Transportation's Office of Safety Education and environmental justice leader UPROSE, is pleased to announce a dedication ceremony to celebrate the unveiling of "We Live Here," a monumental new mural that promotes livable streets in New York City's largest walk-to-work community.

This summer, 15 young people participating in Groundswell's Summer Leadership Institute (SLI) collaborated with artists Crystal Bruno and Angel Garcia to research, design, and fabricate this 98 ft wide by 20 ft high mural. Through this process, the youth artists created a new work of public art that explores how residents living, working, driving, and attending school along 4th Avenue in Sunset Park interact with the roads and with each other.

"Everyone contributed something, so no one gets left out," said youth muralist Jasper Kerbs, in response to the intensely collaborative process behind every Groundswell mural. "We Live Here" is a collage of imagery inspired by the young people's research and sketches, with many symbols present to encourage shared use of the streets.

Unifying the message of the mural is the team's intense focus on the human presence underlying traffic safety efforts. As Lead Artist Crystal Bruno pointed out, "The neighborhood doesn't get recognized for its residential community. This mural discourages people from using 4th Avenue as an expressway and encourages the creation of greener spaces in the Sunset Park community."

Between 2006 and 2010, 88 people were severely injured or killed in traffic incidents along 4th Avenue. Too often treated as a vehicle through-way for speeding drivers, 4th Avenue is also a thriving pedestrian destination, lined with schools, senior centers, churches, libraries, and retail venues. Traffic concerns along this corridor are among the most severe in Brooklyn, with over 50% of drivers speeding at midday and 80% speeding in the evening hours.

“Safe and livable streets are at the heart of everything DOT does and we thank these young artists for helping bring to life these important messages,” said Department of Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan. “With just paint, brushes and imagination, these students have enlivened and enlightened these neighborhoods and proved once again that you’re never too young to care about safer streets.”

“Transportation amenities are the heart of liveable communities. This mural educates, lifts, celebrates, and engages community in reclaiming these spaces,” said Elizabeth Yeampierre, Executive Director of UPROSE.

“Groundswell is particularly excited to unveil this mural as Sunset Park prepares to undergo a number of transformative community-led initiatives to strengthen public safety and improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents,” said Groundswell Executive Director Amy Sananman. “Public art is a powerful tool to add momentum to and raise awareness of these efforts, from a revitalized waterfront to 4th Avenue Corridor Safety Improvements.

About Groundswell

Groundswell brings together artists, youth, and community organizations to use art as a tool for social change. “We Live Here” was completed as part of Groundswell’s flagship program, the Summer Leadership Institute (SLI), which engages nearly 100 youth each summer as paid apprentices on mural projects that beautify neighborhoods and give voice to ideas and perspectives that are underrepresented the public dialog. www.groundswellmural.org

About the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT)

NYC DOT’s mission is to provide for the safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible movement of people and goods in New York City. NYC DOT’s Office of Safety Education runs programs and provides services that promote traffic safety for children, parents, educators, and senior citizens. www.nyc.gov/dot

About UPROSE

UPROSE is dedicated to the development of Southwest Brooklyn and the empowerment of its residents primarily through broad and converging environmental, sustainable development, and youth justice campaigns. Founded in 1966, UPROSE is Brooklyn’s oldest Latino community-based organization. UPROSE’s mission is geared toward organizing, advocacy and developing intergenerational, and indigenous leadership through activism around a host of environmental justice issues. www.uprose.org

“We Live Here” is made possible through the generous support of the NYC DOT. Major financial support for Groundswell’s 2012 Summer Leadership Institute (SLI) is also contributed by Altman Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Brooklyn Community Foundation, Catalog for Giving, Charles Lawrence Keith and Clara Miller Foundation, David Rockefeller Fund, Edelman Community Investment, EILEEN FISHER, Ethel and W. George Kennedy Family Foundation, Irene B. Wolt Lifetime Trust, Lambent Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and its Cultural Innovation Fund, Travelers Foundation, Variety The Children’s Charity, and Winifred Johnson Clive Foundation, in addition to numerous individuals.

SLI is made possible in part by public funds administered by the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City Department of Education, and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development Summer Youth Employment Program.

Groundswell is grateful to the Office of the Mayor of New York City; the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President; and New York City Council Members Sara M. Gonzalez, Letitia James, Brad Lander, Stephen Levin, and Darlene Mealy.

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