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New York laundromat.

Photo: Robin Erler

Beautifying the World One Panel at a Time

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You may not know artist Ed Massey personally, but chances are you've seen him driving through town in his yellow New York taxi with the flowers on top.

Massey and his brother, Bernie, are the masterminds behind Portraits of Hope (POH), an organization devoted to beautifying the world via large-scale civic and public art projects.

Living in Pacific Palisades, you have certainly viewed Massey's work, whether it's in the parking lot at Palisades Elementary or on the lifeguard towers at the beach. POH art is hard to miss—it's colorful, whimsical

and transformative.

In fact, if you have children who have attended any of the local schools in the past 10 years or so, they have probably worked on a Portraits of Hope project.

Though 2010's Summer of Color (lifeguard towers from County Line to San Diego) was simply meant to spruce up the iconic blue lifeguard stations, there was an added, unexpected bonus. "Kids could remember better where they were if they got lost," Massey told the *Palisades News*, because they could identify the colors and shapes on the tower from where they started.

Massey emphasizes that his brother, Bernie, is an equal partner in all things related to Portraits of Hope. Though Massey

gets more recognition since he is the face of the organization and the one who develops the art projects, Bernie has many responsibilities, including education and policy-related issues.

The art—brightly colored shapes painted on vinyl panels—is intended to uplift people and places.

Massey's latest project is a partnership with the County of Los Angeles and the County's Department of Animal Care and Control, which runs the seven County animal shelters (Agoura, Baldwin Park, Carson/Gardena, Castaic, Downey, Lancaster, Palmdale). Those shelters, in turn, work with dozens of city shelters throughout the county.

"About four years ago, I came up with the concept of beautifying animal shelters. I wanted to do something magnificent, and call attention to pet adoption," Massey said.

"L.A. County houses more animals than almost anywhere else. Approximately 80,000 animals go through the shelter system each year.

"They're not the happiest environments, visually speaking," he said.

Fourteen thousand people are expected to take part in painting 8,000 pieces for the shelters.

"Basically, the concept is to beautify all seven shelters, interior and exterior," Massey said. He has designed special pieces to go inside each dog's kennel, which he hopes "will illuminate some vibrancy" and draw attention to how wonderful the animals are.

Another goal is that kids who participate



Artist Ed Massey at home with his dog, Milo.

Photo: Lesly Hall

will bring their parents to a shelter and hopefully leave with a pet.

And each shelter's staff will benefit as well. "It's an uplifting experience to be in an environment that's cheerful and colorful," Massey said, mentioning that studies have been done on the subject. Plain walls will be transformed into "fun and friendly environments."

He's also hoping filmmakers and photographers visit, and help spread the word about pet adoption.

Massey is used to large installations. "MacArthur Park was the largest public art project anywhere in the world in 2015," he



Ice at Santa Monica.

Photo: Wire Image