

Contribute

:the people and ideas of giving

COMMUNITY

Art in the Fast Lane

If art moves you, you'll have your fill through December: thousands of New York taxis are covering their quotidian shells with profusions of multicolored flowers hand-painted on vinyl—750,000 square feet of it—by some 23,000 New York City residents who range in age from preschool through their 80s. The brainchild of brothers Ed and Bernie Massey, Californians who founded an umbrella organization, Portraits of Hope, in 1995, the project seeks to adapt visual imagery for large-scale projects of social consequence.

Garden in Transit is the largest art-therapy program in the city's history—and its kick-off coincides with the sixth anniversary of 9/11 and the 100th anniversary of the taxicab in New York City.

Participants, recruited from schools, hospitals, and after-school programs, spent half of each three-hour collaborative session this past summer learning about current affairs, community issues, individual and social responsibilities, and the power of teamwork. They spent the rest of the time painting the taxi panels. Disabled painters were given



Like Christo's Central Park gates, this project, called *Garden in Transit*, is one of the city's largest-scale public art projects, a one-time effort that culminates years of lobbying the city. Unlike *The Gates*, the art is designed to come to you. "Taxis are the most ubiquitous surface in New York and the one visual everyone has access to," says project director Kyla Fullenwider. "It's the best canvas because it's everywhere."

specialized brushes. The decorated taxis, Fullenwider says, "become vehicles for change."

And when the exhibition stops rolling after the holidays this year, taxi owners and drivers, as well as participating communities and institutions, will be able to keep pieces of these populist murals-in-motion. Says Fullenwider: "Art can be therapeutic for a city." ▲

—Carol Lippert Gray

PHOTOGRAPH: DAN DEMETRIAD