

## Towers of Hope Rise on California Beaches



Folks headed to Los Angeles beaches this Memorial Day weekend will find an unusual burst of color in the sand—158 painted lifeguard towers lining the 31 mile stretch between Malibu and the Palos Verdes peninsula. It's the latest manifestation of Ed and Bernie Massey's transient public art program, *Portraits of Hope*. They've previously left their mark on New York City's taxicabs, airport control towers, even oil rigs.

Dubbed the "Summer of Color," this behemoth public art project and civic initiative is the culmination of nearly half a year's hard work, involving thousands of volunteers, hundreds of gallons of paint and, a heck of a lot of good will.

What began as a sole public art project nearly two decades ago, POH has evolved into a full-fledged program for social good encompassing creative art therapy, civic engagement and environmental and humanitarian efforts. As with all other iterations of the POH program, children from pediatric hospitals and their families helped with the painting.

Volunteers like L.A. resident and film editor, Matt Colchamiro, spent several hours a week for nearly six months working on the project—much of his time was spent with children in hospitals, hand painting panels that would eventually be installed on each lifeguard tower.

"The kids in the hospitals, whatever their health issues were, when they started painting they forget about that for a little while, they start smiling and enjoying themselves," says Colchamiro. "It really empowers these kids. Especially those who might not get out of the hospital for a few months or years but if they have a TV in the room, it'll be on the news, and they'll see it."

Portraits of Hope stands as a beacon for resilience and change in the world. "Hopefully this becomes a call to action," says Ed Massey. "As with all of our projects, hopefully people will see the enjoyment that it's given to thousands of kids and the general public."

The towers may look familiar to those familiar with Massey's mammoth 2007 *Garden In Transit* exhibition that covered the fleets of New York Taxi cabs in hand painted flower motifs. A reproduction of the hood from a Ford Crown Victoria taxi cab is currently on view (along with other notable works from Massey's repertoire) in the lobby of *Hotel Casa Del Mar* in collaboration with the "Summer of Color" initiative.

The installations will remain on the lifeguard towers through October, when the panels will be removed and transported to Haiti to be used as transitional building materials for homes, shelters and schools.