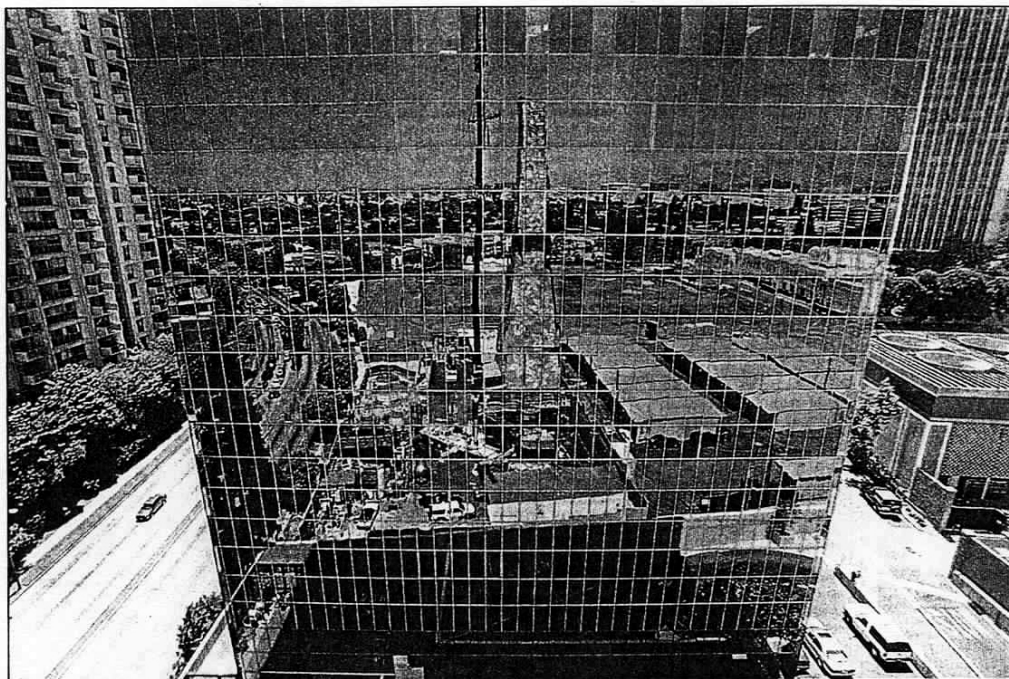


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Photos by ROBERT GAUTHIER / Los Angeles Times

Beverly Hills High School's now-camouflaged 15-story oil derrick is reflected in the glass of a nearby office building.

Oil Derrick Is Reborn as a 'Tower of Hope'

■ **Art:** The Beverly Hills eyesore is covered with panels bearing flowers painted by children in hospitals.

By BOB POOL
TIMES STAFF WRITER

People suddenly find themselves pumped up by Beverly Hills' eyesore oil well.

That's because the petroleum derrick that for two decades has stuck out like a sore thumb at Beverly Hills High School has blossomed into a 155-foot-tall artwork—compliments of children throughout California.

Youngsters in schools across the state joined hospitalized pediatric patients in painting stylized flowers on vinyl fabric panels that now cover the tower.

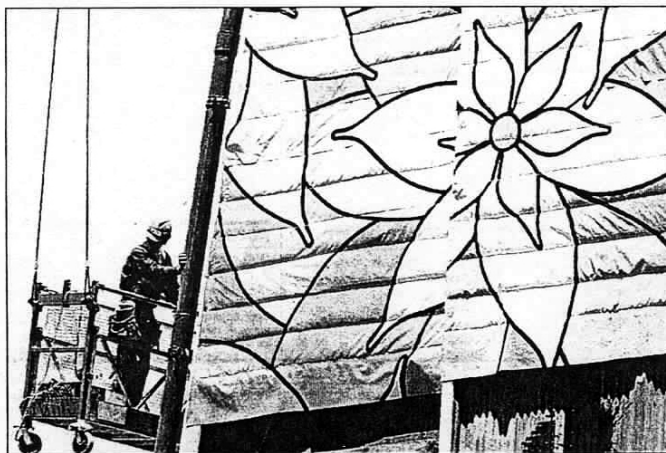
A volunteer group that has spent five years planning the decorative covering and carrying panels to hospitals for children to paint has dubbed the derrick the "Tower of Hope."

Members say the drilling platform may become the launch pad for a nationwide art program for hospitalized youngsters.

About 35,000 schoolchildren helped apply three layers of base paint on the 115 panels. The flower blossoms were painted later by 4,000 pediatric patients from nearly 100 hospitals.

The project was led by West Los Angeles artist and writer Ed Massey.

Massey, 37, got the idea of involving hospitalized youngsters in art when he visited several pediatric units to read aloud his children's



Jimmy Carroll of Hathaway Dinwiddie Construction Co. secures vinyl fabric panels.

book "Milton." Massey was surprised when he repeatedly saw bedridden children doodling and drawing flowers on scratch paper.

"The symbol of the flower was an aspect of hope, inspiration and beauty to them," he said. Like blossoms, "many of them were also fragile, with life-threatening illnesses, with immune systems that were not 100%."

The idea of covering the derrick with children's flowers came one day when Massey was

exercising at the athletic field at Beverly Hills High, where he graduated in 1981. Gazing up at the 15-story tower, he was struck by what he describes as "the elegant shape" of the otherwise drab, industrial structure.

Why not replace its gray soundproofing panels with colorful depictions of flowers? he thought.

Massey called several hospital pediatric

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