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## Artist Daniel Hauben finds a 'sense of place' here in The Bronx

By PAULETTE SCHNEIDER

On a quiet, leafy Riverdale street, Daniel Hauben opens the door to his windowless ground-floor studio, turns on the lights, and a world of vivid canvases comes to life.

The number 5 train roars by as vendors hawk their wares under the el. The distinctive Broadway Bridge and a wedge of Yankee Stadium bleachers anchor bustling streetscapes that ascend into panoramic urban vistas.

The oils and pastels staged in Hauben's studio will dazzle viewers at an exhibition opening October 23 in Bronx Community College's Hall of Fame Gallery. The show, called "Creating a Sense of Place," will complement the permanent installation of 22 Hauben paintings in the college's brand-new North Hall and Library.

The library art collection, named "A Sense of Place," has two stairway murals and 20 smaller murals along a balcony frieze visible throughout the facility's "information commons" area. All depict Bronx scenes, including some that focus on the campus.

Hauben was commissioned for the project in 2008 by an interdisciplinary committee including Wave Hill art curator Jennifer McGregor, who served as his liaison.

Of the four artists who submitted proposals, "Danny was the unanimous choice," she said.

The commission was an out-of-studio experience for Hauben, an opportunity to "wear another hat" and interact with some of the "15 companies working on this building."

"My choice is to not just be an artist in my studio but to try to bridge the gap into the world and try to get exposure, work with the community," he said.

As linked as he is with the local landscape, Hauben said he doesn't want to be thought of as a Bronx-only artist. "That's not all I do," he said.

His 800-piece inventory includes natural landscapes and surreal pieces, including some addressing the 9/11 tragedy.

"My whole trajectory in terms of my life and my career is to tune into my strongest impulses of what to paint," he said. "To me, it's a process of discovery—I don't want to be pigeonholed."

Those impulses—and a traveling set of pastels—have influenced his style.

"Of late, I've been doing these pop-up paintings," he said, pointing to an engaging pastel where potential customers mull over yard-sale merchandise piled on tables outside his in-laws' update home.

"My approach changed," he said. "For ten years, I painted cityscapes without any people. When I started incorporating people in my paint-

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Artist Daniel Hauben in his Riverdale studio preparing for an exhibition on view at Bronx Community College's Hall of Fame from October 23 through November 29. Call 718-289-5341 for more information.

## Artist Hauben finds a 'sense of place'

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ings, they were as rigid, and seemingly made out of the same material, as the buildings."

Learning to capture the fleeting gestures of people in the unplanned pop-up pieces helped him free up even the stationary elements in his more formal paintings.

"By the very nature of this process, there's a kind of a freedom and a momentum that can animate it and give it a kind of spontaneity that maybe if I had all the time in the world, I wouldn't be able to bring to the work."

He also found he'd been using stronger colors in the spontaneous pieces. Pleased with the bolder palette, he now enlivens older works by adding primary tones.

Hauben, now 56, has been doodling since childhood. He hated school and often took the day off.

"To appease my father when he came home from work and said 'Again you're home?' I would draw and show him all this stuff and say 'Look what I did today!'"

When he was 15, his father said, "So you want to be an artist? Let's make some calls."

"He called the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim and the Whitney, saying 'My son is an artist. You should look at his work.' I wound up getting an appointment with an archivist at the Guggenheim."

Hauben showed the man a portfolio of works in magic marker and oil pastels.

"Just keep doing your thing," the archivist said. "Don't let anyone influence you. Come back in five years."

He did, and was told to come back again in another five years.

"By now, I'm 25 years old and I have another portfolio. I'm doing Bronx scenes."

At the archivist's suggestion, Hauben called Philip Verre, who had just been appointed curator for the Bronx Museum of the Arts. Verre gave him a tour of the museum's under-construction new digs at the former Young Israel of the Concourse.

A few years later, Hauben got a show at the museum.

"It was a direct result of my father making that call," he said.

His next project is painting Bronx artists—and there are more and more of them—at work in their studios. His fantasy would be to entice culture to the borough by making the Kingsbridge armory a space for artists, a Dia of The Bronx.

Hauben teaches drawing to architecture students at CCNY and to adults at the Riverdale Y. An online gallery of his award-winning work is at [danielhauben.com](http://danielhauben.com).

The Bronx Community College exhibition will be on view from Tuesday, October 23, through Thursday, November 29. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. through 2 p.m. For more information, call the college art department at 718-289-5341.