

Artist finds beauty in Bronx's gritty streets

Under the el, up on the roof immortalized in paintings of Bronx's urban landscape

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For a quarter of a century, the Bronx has been artist Daniel Hauben's inspiration. In grungy elevated subway tracks and aging apartment buildings he has found what other landscape artists find in sunlit forests and seaside villas.

Now the Bronx is returning the love by giving Hauben an artist's dream: a small piece of immortality.

Hauben, 55, has finished a huge public art commission for the Bronx Community College's North Instructional Building and Library, a \$102 million dollar complex opening this summer. Twenty-two original works—each recreating a Bronx street scene or portraying the view from a Bronx rooftop—will hang there permanently, an honor Hauben said is one of the highest an artist can receive.

"When I think of what an artist wants, what is an artist's fantasy—to have a permanent memorial of his work," Hauben said, "this is pretty good."

The two largest paintings show the view from the colonnade of the Hall of Fame of Great Americans on the Bronx Community College Campus. They will greet students as they walk up the new library's staircases to its main lobby. The remaining 20 paintings, each 1½ by 5 feet, will adorn the base of the rectangular second floor balcony.

The paintings show the world that Bronx Community College students inhabit, said Hauben. Among the views are depictions of the Hudson River, Yankee Stadium, the 207th Street Bridge and the elevated #6 subway line.

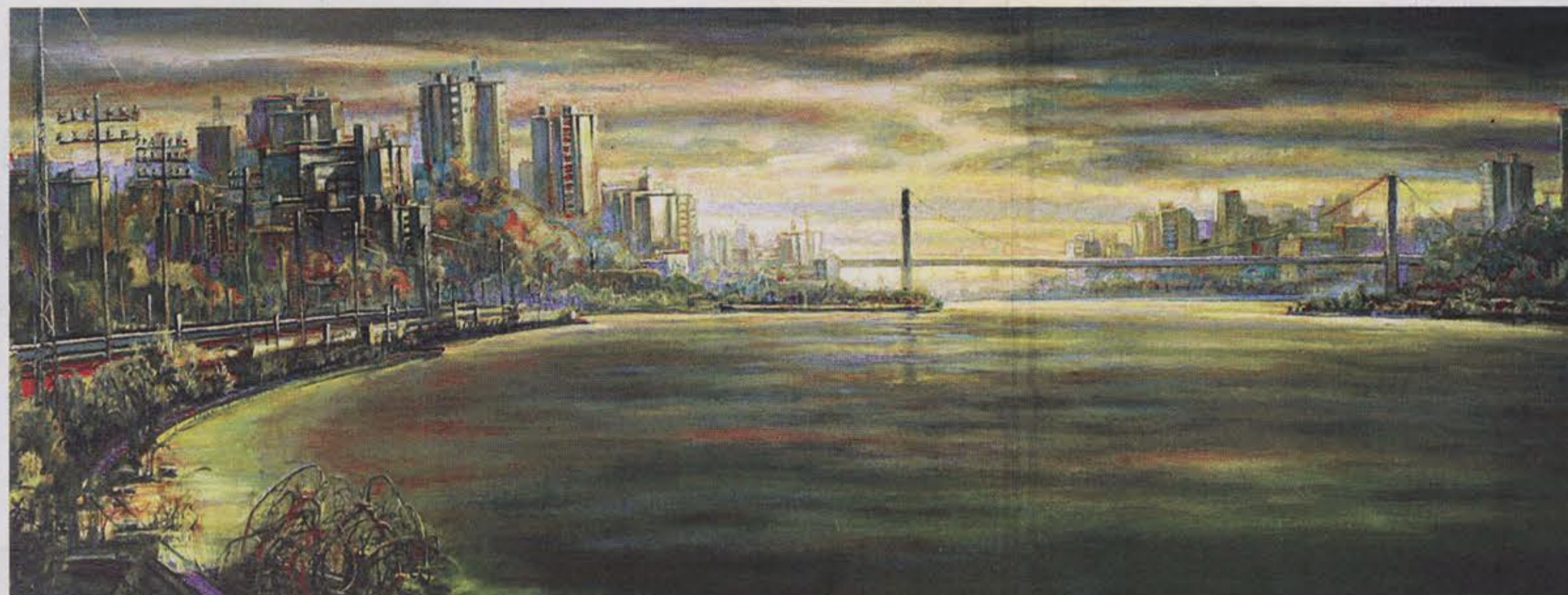
There are also scenes of campus life, among them the entrance to the landmark Gould Memorial Library, designed by Stanford White, one of New York's most noted architects of the 19th century, for what was then NYU's uptown campus.

"It's nice to give a different look on the Bronx, because so many people look down on the borough," said Micaella Ipsan, 20, who is majoring in early childhood education. "Maybe the word of mouth about the art will attract more students to come to the library, then stay," she said.

The interplay of light and dark in the paintings gives the gritty, urban landscapes an aura of warmth and beauty.

"The paintings give off a good vibe," said Timothy Yeav, 19, a computer science major. "It's like it turns what is a frown into a smile."

Finding beauty in the urban landscape is a hallmark of Hauben's work, which is included in the collections of the White House, the Museum of the City of New



York and Harvard University.

Hauben was born in the Bronx and lives in Kingsbridge Heights. His work can be seen throughout the borough, from an apartment building on the Grand Concourse and East 166th Street to the McDonalds near Yankee Stadium.

But although he has built a reputation in the borough, the scale of this commission and the importance of its location set it apart.

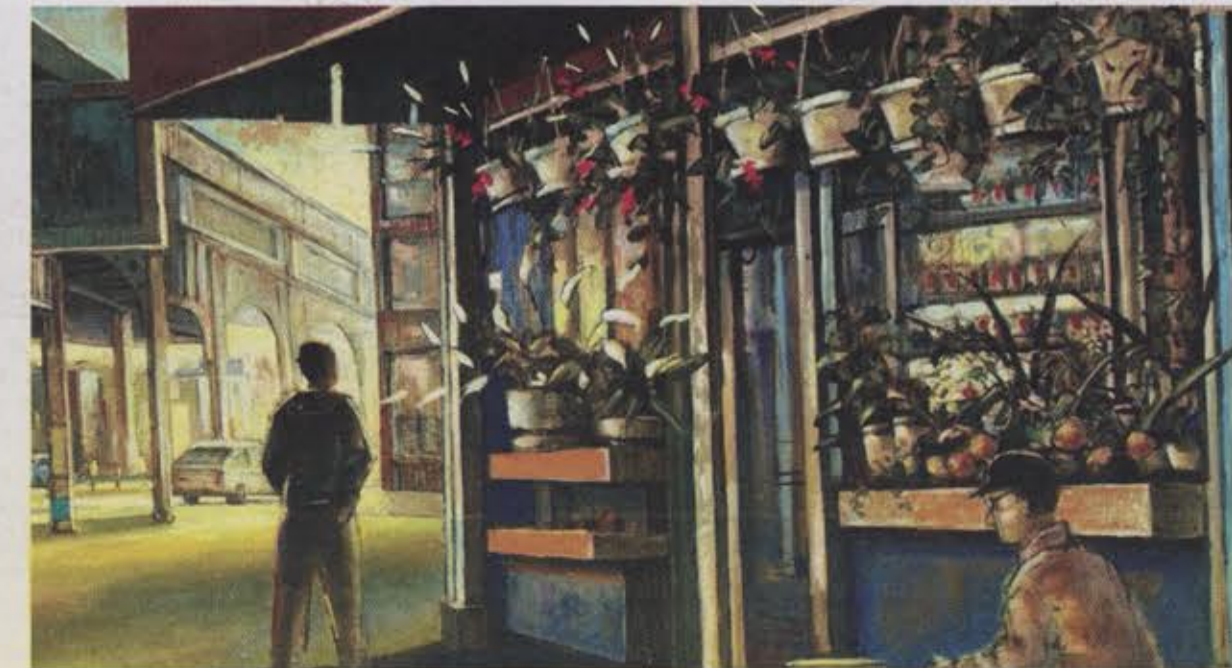
The new library, designed by the noted architect Robert A.M. Stern, echoes the classical style of the original campus. Hauben, an adjunct lecturer in the architecture department at City College, believes that having his work displayed in the new building connects it to a rich heritage.

"It's exciting because this is about bringing back the original feeling of college campuses," Hauben said.

Creating work that would endure was uppermost on Hauben's mind during the two years it took to create the paintings, he said. Many of them are based on portions of paintings Hauben had already done, but his focus this time was on perfecting them for a lifetime in the library. The oil paintings were painted on Belgian linen, a cloth known for its ability to absorb rich color and to last.

Now that the paintings are done, Hauben's next challenge is how to make the most of the attention and excitement that will surround the opening of the new building. The installation of the artwork is slated for July 2012, and Hauben will also have a separate event to showcase them.

"If I can connect with people on a human level and with dignity, then people will respond," Hauben said.



The view down the Hudson River, top left, and of the old and new Yankee Stadiums, center right, are two of the paintings that will hang in Bronx Community College's new library. Portions of some of the other paintings that will hang there depict the entrance to the college's Gould Memorial Library, top right, a street scene under the el on Jerome Ave., bottom left, the Kingsbridge Armory, center left, and Ho Kim Fruits at the juncture of Southern Boulevard, Boston Road and 174th St. below the 2/5 station, bottom right.