

The RIVERDALE PRESS



Photos courtesy of Daniel Hauben

DANIEL HAUBEN'S painting 'Burnside Station' was installed in the Bronx Community College's new North Hall and Library building and is among a series of paintings he was commissioned to produce for the school.

Taking the long view

Artist installs sense of pride in the northern borough

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Daniel Hauben, 56, stood in the second-floor lobby of Bronx Community College's new North Hall and Library building, pointing to his mural in the stairwell.

"This vantage point is just fantastic," he said.

He could have been talking about the perspective from which students will view his artwork as they exit the library, but he was talking about the painting itself.

The painting, "View of the Harlem River," is based on the view of University Heights from Target's rooftop parking lot in Marble Hill. It is one of 22 he created for Bronx Community College's new \$80 million building, which opened with school in September.

The collection is called A Sense of Place and there was nobody better to create that sense than Bronx-born-and-raised Mr. Hauben.

In 2008, Bronx Community College commissioned him — the only Bronxite out of four finalists competing for the job — to create the murals.

It was not made official for two years, but in May 2010, he was given the go-ahead and began painting.

"I signed that contract and then I was just pouring out the work," he said. "I was off to the races."

Though some of his paintings evoke the surrealism he sees in the Bronx, the scenes he depicted for this project — the biggest of his career — are iconic Bronx.

"What's quintessentially Bronxian landscape? We have the rooftops, we have the trains, we have the street scenes, we have the waterways," he said leaning against the railing of third-floor balcony, looking out across a library speckled with students reading and using computers.

Many of the scenes he painted in his Riverdale studio were taken from works he has already completed, like the old Yankee Stadium being torn down



'NORTH ENTRANCE'

as the new one was being built or of the Kingsbridge Armory. Others are new subjects for him, like BCC's campus, including the Hall of Fame for Great Americans.

He said he wanted the works to reflect the lives of BCC students, so he painted a view of the Burnside No. 4 train station, where many get off for school.

He also wanted the paintings to fit the majestic new building, designed by Robert A. M. Stern Architects.

"The style of the building is a throwback. It harkens back to kind of the collegiate gothic style, a formal, more classical approach to architecture. And my work is like that. I'm not cutting edge, I'm a traditional guy, but bringing that tradition to the present day," he said.

Mr. Hauben paints what he knows. "The world I'm most familiar with is the Bronx," he said, and it's his Bronx scenes that have garnered him international recognition.

He was born, as he says, in the "northeast corner of the Bronx" and moved to Fort Independence Street when he was 9. He moved away briefly when he was 18, but has been living in the borough since his mid-20s. He currently lives with his wife in the same apartment that he grew up in.

He's a fixture in Bronx arts scene. He has been

teaching painting at the Riverdale YM-YWHA for 17 years and also teaches at City College of New York.

His paintings have graced the pages of *The Press* many times and he's won numerous awards for his art (*The Press* learned he won so many Bronx Council of the Arts awards he was told he had to take it easy and submit less often).

This is not his first foray into public art, either; he designed and created the stained glass art at the Freeman Street No. 2 and No 5. train station in 2007.

"A Sense of Place" is one of the greatest public arts projects in the history of the mainland. Bronx Borough Historian Lloyd Ultan equates it with two murals completed in the borough in the 1930s: James Monroe Hewlett's in the Bronx County Building's Veterans' Memorial Hall and Ben Shahn's in the lobby of the Bronx Central Post Office.

"Here are tranquil rivers spanned by modern bridges, the abstract designs evoked in elevated subway structures, the glowing sunsets seen from apartment house rooftops ... " Mr. Ultan wrote in a foreword to the forthcoming catalog of Mr. Hauben's work that BCC is producing.

It's also the biggest project Mr. Hauben has ever completed, and he said he hopes it will help generate some recognition for artists like him in the Bronx.

"I at least would like to have the acknowledgement from the community that a bus driver gets, or a plumber, that you play a role that's viable. In our culture it can be challenging as an artist."

"So often people say to me, 'Oh I pass this spot a million times, I never had time to really look at it.' Well, that's what I can do as an artist. That's what I do. I stop and I spend the day there, or a week there or a lifetime there."

A Sense of Place is open to the public at Bronx Community College, located at 2155 University Ave. An accompanying exhibit, *Creating a Sense of Place*, will be on view at the college from Tuesday, Oct. 23 to Thursday, Nov. 29. An opening reception will take place on Sunday, Nov. 4, from 1 to 5 p.m.



'KINGSBRIDGE ARMORY'



DANIEL HAUBEN works in his studio on a painting for BCC.

Photo by Judith Lane