

## A borough's beauty

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Artist Daniel Hauben

## La belleza del condado

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### "Our sun sheds its light on every place"

### Hauben celebrates borough's beauty

Story and photos by Robin Elisabeth Kilmer

Monet had his ponds, Da Vinci his Mona Lisa.

Daniel Hauben has the Bronx. The Bronx-born Hauben has been painting in the borough for over 20 years.

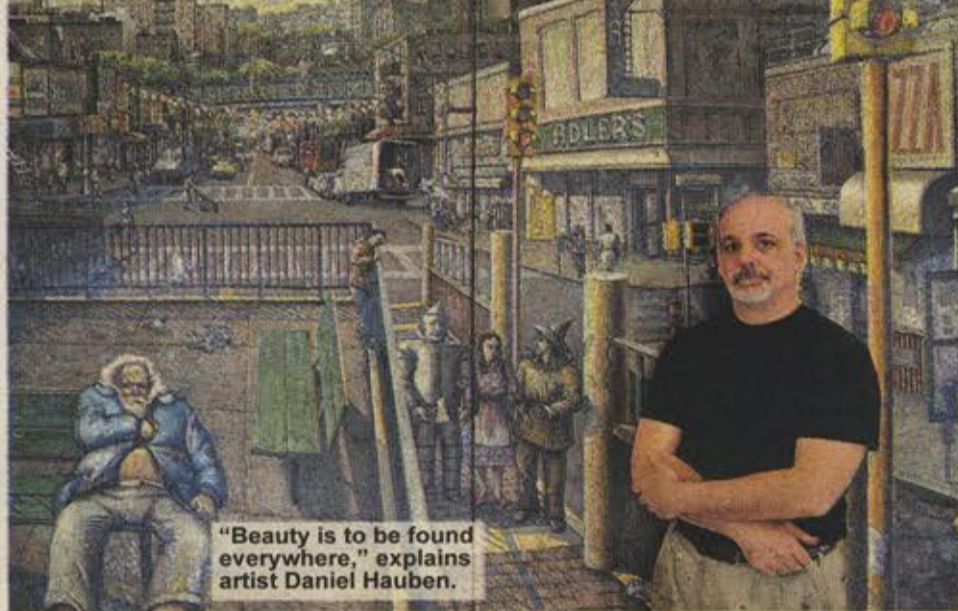
If you've not seen his work in the numerous galleries in which the visual artist has been exhibited, it is likely that you've come across him working in the streets.

Hauben works in the trenches. But while Monet would set up his canvas and easel in the rustic scenes of the countryside, Hauben prefers to settle in at the urban intersections, walkways and thoroughfares of the Bronx to draw street scenes and landscapes.

Many of his paintings are currently on display at the new library at CUNY's Bronx Community College, which commissioned him to paint 22 pieces. Hauben is a multimedia artist has also worked in glass and bronze.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) commissioned him for fabricated stained glass mosaics that now stand at the Freedman subway stop of the 2 and 5 trains.

Starting Fri., Mar. 21<sup>st</sup>, Hauben's exhibit "Expanding Views: The Art of Daniel Hauben" will be on display at the Andrew Freedman Home through April 5<sup>th</sup>.



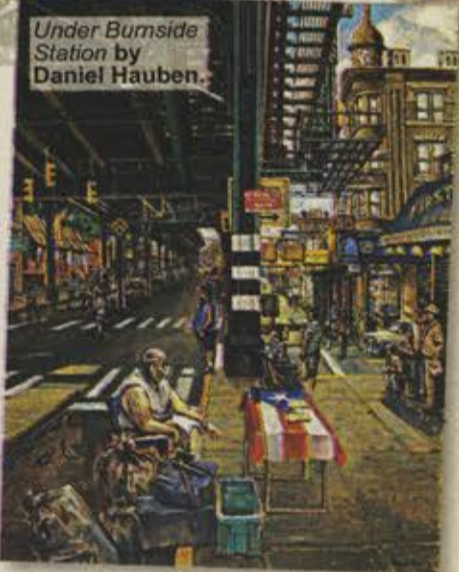
"Beauty is to be found everywhere," explains artist Daniel Hauben.

The Andrew Freedman Home, now owned and run by the Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council, has recently become a site for art exhibit and installations.

The Freedman exhibit will feature pieces not previously shown to the public, as many are too large-scale to fit in smaller gallery

spaces. The Freedman Home, with its high ceilings and expansive floors, provides ample room for Hauben's work.

"I'm so happy for an opportunity to show some of these bigger pieces that have been tucked away in racks for many years," said Hauben.



Under Burnside Station by Daniel Hauben.

This past Fri., Mar. 14<sup>th</sup>, he engaged Head Start preschoolers at the Freedman Home on the question "What is art?" as part of a program of the Bronx Children's Museum in which children made and displayed their own work.

"Hauben's work is participatory. [It is] inclusive for the inhabitants of a borough that seems to have been largely overlooked

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by other artists," said Walter Puryear, Project Manager at the Freedman House. "It allows people to realize that the environment they walk through every day has an aesthetic that is worth validating."

*No Place Like Home*, which could easily cover the wall of a small city bedroom, is Hauben's take on L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* tale. Dorothy, who seems to be of Latina heritage, walks arm-in-arm with the Scarecrow and the Tin Man. The group strolls east on 170<sup>th</sup> Street and the Grand Concourse. In the distance, the faint facial features of the wizard rise over the hill beyond Jerome Avenue. The characters were superimposed upon an earlier streetscape that Hauben created in the mid-nineties.

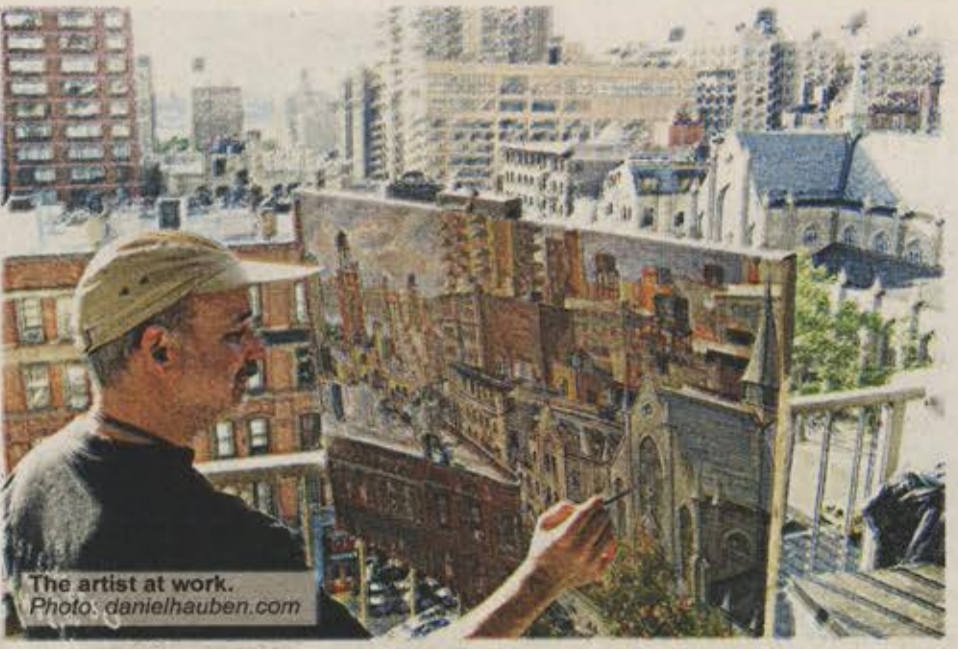
Also visible in the piece is a homeless man lounging on a bench, sporting an unkempt beard. His only possessions are a fistful of paintbrushes.

"If my career doesn't kick in the next five years, that's me," explained Hauben about his thoughts at the time.

Another large piece, featuring several panels, offers a panoramic view from the balcony of Hauber's Kingsbridge apartment. Hauben captures the warm glow of afternoon as the sun settles on the hilly cityscape.

The exhibit features his Bronx panoramas and street scenes, as well as more surreal work he's done in his studio, including *The Fifth Crusade*, a surreal statement against the war in Iraq, and two paintings made from the rubble of the World Trade Center.

It will also feature work he's done for *Art and About*, his new instructional art show on BronxNet. Two of the paintings were made on



The artist at work. Photo: danielhauben.com

the grounds of the Andrew Freedman Home, when its skate park was being installed. It is a "pop-up piece" that he did on the spot.

Hauben has been painting on-site for much of his career, in many cities around the world. But working in the Bronx, he says, is different.

"What distinguishes working in the Bronx is that people [here] have no sense of personal space, so they're getting as close as they can," he explained. "I've even gotten paint on people if I'm mixing and then I go to make the next brush stroke and they've somehow located themselves between me and the

painting. Suddenly I'm painting on them."

Hauben prefers his native borough even to other parts of the city. "In Manhattan, it's very different," he said. "Everybody [there] is so cool. Nothing surprises anybody. It's as if they expect you to be painting. In the Bronx, they don't expect you at all. People have always been very friendly."

So friendly, in fact, that even when immersed in other business, they'll stop to help Hauben in pursuit of his work.

He recalled a time when he chose to paint an abandoned, red Victorian home in the South

Bronx. The building was, in fact, a shooting gallery frequented by drug addicts. Residents on the block worked with Hauben to make certain some of the subjects coming in and out of the building, many of whom needed assistance staying awake, were included in his composition.

He has also proven to be equally adept at accommodating his subjects.

In another instance, as he worked near the Bronx Zoo, all the children nearby sought to be included in the painting. Hauben obliged them, diligently making sure to add each one in, not telling them that he would have to take them out for the sake of the composition.

"The kinds of interactions I like is when people tell me things about their neighborhood," he said. "It triggers people feelings about the location, where they are. Sometimes you get these great anecdotes from people's memories about the way the Bronx used to be."

And often it is a learning experience for passersby, who wonder why anyone would be interested in painting bodegas or fruit vendors under the shadow of the elevated lines.

"People often say, 'I pass this spot everyday and never really looked at it.' If they see an artist they figure something must be of interest there and they look at it a new way," he said. "People identify art with certain subject matters, not something they pass every day. Beauty is to be found everywhere. Our sun sheds its light on every place."

For more information about Daniel Hauben, visit [www.danielhauben.com](http://www.danielhauben.com).

The Andrew Freedman Home is located at 1125 Grand Concourse. The public reception for Hauben's exhibit is from 6-10 p.m. on Fri., March 21.