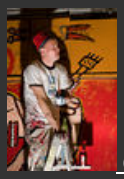


NEW PAINTINGS
Canvas/Large un-sold works
Paper/Small un-sold works
"Very Small" paintings
"31 Days in July" project
Paintings (2000-2004)
Solomon Islands and Bulgaria
Paintings (1994 - 1998)
Short Film
Contact Sesow.com
Biography
Interviews and Articles
Shots from Shows
In the Studio
Sesow.com

As part of the Capital Fringe Festival, on July 21st and 22nd,
Matt Sesow and Dana Ellyn painted a mural
on the outside wall of the Warehouse Downtown Arts Complex

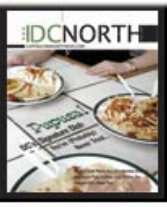
1017-21 7th street, NW (Washington, DC)

 click image to visit photo set by photographer James Calder. photos from night of July 21.

CAPITAL COMMUNITY NEWS

IDC NORTH

AUGUST 2006



2 Ward Two News

BY SUSAN RUETHER

Local Artists Fringe Ward 2 in 24 Hours of Color

Perched on a ladder fixing the face of Jesus, Dana Ellyn avoided the blazing sun in the late afternoon as shade fell on the bright orange wall she detailed. It made sense, after all, that she and fellow artist Matt Sesow begin their round-the-clock mural painting session at 3 p.m. so as to avoid having their sweat drip into the bottles and boxes of paint below.

Not that such a thing would have been frowned upon; it was a 24-hour act of painting associated with the Capital Fringe Festival. This year, the first-annual festival brought together hundreds of artists for over 400 shows in eleven days: a mind boggling range of performances, some experimental and others on the verge of wacky. Unlike the theatre performances however, the mural will become a permanent part of the 7th Street landscape, though Ellyn and Sesow expected their mural to be a work in progress even after they finished. "We expect that people will write on it - that's fine," Sesow commented. "We know it will change."

After coming to terms with the scale of the project and the texture of hundreds of staples jammed into the wooden storefront, the artists began their work with house-paint and acrylics. Describing the painting as "free and looser" than the studio work they are used to, each of the painters filled the space with large figures. "Picasso and Diego Rivera rip-offs," Sesow commented of his half of the mural. The painting, after just three hours, depicted large scale artists and laborers, a figure of Jesus looking down on the current state of affairs and a lady voyeur sipping a drink in the corner.

Before the artists got there, you might say the wall Ellyn and Sesow covered (a long-abandoned storefront adjacent to the Warehouse Theatre) had their names on it. When Fringe festival director, Julianne Brienza, thought of the idea of the mural, she and Warehouse co-director, Molly Rupert, immediately chose the duo - local painters and a couple - who had showed work at the Warehouse.

The Warehouse served as home base for the festival this year, hosting a majority of productions and events.

"We're not used to being watched as we paint," Sesow commented in regards to on-lookers. "People always think the painting is done, no matter the stage," he said. Not soon after, a man stopped to ask if they would paint around the corner of the building. Sesow also admitted that the painting might be "influenced by working at 2 a.m. after a few beers." Yet at the beginning stages, the figures are clear and deliberate, and the colors are bold.

The history of the Fringe Festival dates back to 1947, when eight uninvited performance groups arrived at the exclusive Edinburgh International Festival and staged a series of guerilla performances. Cities across the US have adopted the tradition, with DC as the 76th location to make space for the peculiar and particular in local art.

"Besides art-o-matic, the Fringe Festival is really the only grass-roots venue for support of the visual arts [in DC]," commented Sesow, who now supports himself entirely through the sale of his paintings. He describes DC as a "gallery-centric city, where you have to sign an uber-contract and give up your soul to sell a painting for 50 percent [of the profit]." Both artists say that venues like the Fringe allow artists to show and sell directly to patrons which ultimately benefits artistic production in the city. Ellyn and Sesow painted well into the wee morning hours for free this time, however, to "enjoy the process of making art . . . it's fun to support the Fringe," Sesow commented.

Matt Sesow will hold an open studio on Aug. 5 from Noon- 6 p.m., www.sesow.com, 202-319-1459. Dana Ellyn will hold her open studio on Aug. 12 from Noon - 6 p.m., www.danaellyn.com, 202-737-6161. For more Capital Fringe Festival details, visit www.capfringe.org

washingtonpost.com

GOING OUT GURUS

Fringe for the Eyes

Nearly every kind of performance art will invade downtown over the next 10 days in conjunction with the much-anticipated Capital Fringe Festival, which kicks off today. The visual arts are not a huge part of Fringe festivities, but three events give a taste of offbeat contemporary art in Washington.

I'm most looking forward to "Watch This Space (Get Painted)," a 24-hour painting project by local artists Dana Ellyn and Matt Sesow. The artists will complete a mural on the Warehouse building between 3 p.m. on Friday and 3 p.m. on Saturday, and the event corresponds with the 24-hour showing of Unmapped at the Warehouse.

Ellyn and Sesow are in the midst of 31 Days in July, a project they have taken on every year since 2003. For each day in July, the artists paint a canvas inspired by news on the front page of that day's Washington Post. (Examples of their work so far are posted here and here). Though the artists haven't planned what exactly will end up on the Warehouse wall, they expect the work might reflect the 31 Days project. Graffiti stencil elements might also make their way into the project; it is on the side of a building after all.

Also from Sesow and Ellyn is a project called "Banners From the Fringe." For this exhibition -- on view at the surprisingly attractive exhibition space at the Washington, D.C. Economic Partnership -- Sesow, Ellyn and about 20 of their artist friends created art on top of old street-post banners donated by the Downtown Business Improvement District. Despite the fact that all of the artists had to work in basically the same framework -- skinny or fat vertical rectangular canvases -- the result is an incredibly diverse show.



They will begin painting at approximately 3pm on July 21st and finish by 3pm on July 22nd 2006 (with a break during the wee-hours of the night/morning).

Images of the completed mural and photos of them at work will be posted here after the event.

View the work of Matt Sesow by clicking here (www.sesow.com)
View the work of Dana Ellyn by clicking here (www.danaellyn.com)



Dana Ellyn and Sesow after posting their "WATCH THIS SPACE" flyers on the future site of the mural.

Local Artists Fringe Ward 2 in 24 Hours of Color, July 2006 written by Susan Ruether (DC North Newspaper)

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CLICK HERE FOR MORE PAINTINGS...