



A mural by Augustina Droze, right, and Buffalo Public School students graces the corner at Grant Street and Auburn Avenue. Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News

Four-story mural celebrates Grant Street area residents

Four-story artwork honors people of Grant Street area

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Murals can bring excitement and vitality to neighborhoods and downtowns. That's the intent of a towering, four-story wall project on the West Side, unveiled Thursday on the south side of Lorigo's Meating Place at 185 Grant St. at Auburn Avenue.

"Grant Street Global Voices" – with photographic images of past and current residents, portrayals of diverse cultures and a clash of vivid colors and patterns with gray tones – was created by muralist Augustina Droze with help from students at International School 45 and Lafayette High School.

"It was a great project to work on, just to know all the stories of the people and the immigrant and refugee communities here," said Droze, who also has created murals on the west side of McKinley High School, and on Elmwood Avenue near Bidwell Parkway with artist Bruce Adams.

Droze said it took about a year of planning and 2½ months of painting. The students did the more abstract designs.

The mural consists of 80 4-by-8-foot aluminum panels, which were mounted onto the wall by a sign company.

"They were in little pieces in my studio, and I could never see it together until the very end," said Droze, who gave birth three weeks ago to a son, Sebastian. "I'm very happy with it."

The collaborative process included teaching artists from lead organization Young Audiences of Western New York, which connects artists with young people in schools and after-school programs, and which secured the \$75,000 National Endowment for the Arts "Our Town" grant. Art education students from the SUNY Buffalo State Community Academic Center also worked with the students, and the City of

Buffalo was a key supporter.

Howard Cohen, interim president of Buffalo State, praised the mural and the revival of the West Side that he feels it signifies.

“I am a huge fan of public art because it expresses our values, and in this particular case the values we all place on the immigrant population that is here in Buffalo,” Cohen said. “This is a country that has been built strong by immigrants, and it reminds us how important immigration is for our future and our vitality.”

“This is wonderful,” said Jimmy Lorigo, owner of the meat market. “All of these beautiful colors really speaks to this neighborhood, and all these beautiful colors of people in this neighborhood that are all working together and for the community.”

Philip Ogle, chair of the Buffalo State Fine Arts Department; Candace Masters, assistant professor of fine arts; and five of their students contributed significantly to the painting.

Additional artwork by the students is also on display in more than a dozen storefronts in the immediate neighborhood.

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