

Public Artist Wants To Paint the Town Blue

While just about every New Yorker seems to have an opinion on the future of ground zero, there is still no official procedure for proposing plans to reshape the disaster site. Taking matters into their own hands, artists are bringing their ideas to Community Board 1 in the hopes of mobilizing grassroots support.



Mary Miss, a well-known public artist and longtime Tribeca resident, started thinking about temporary art for ground zero during the three weeks she spent

and galvanized-steel barriers around the lot's perimeter with modular blue partitions—a combination of flexible mesh fencing and upright plastic pipes. (The barriers would enable the perimeter to be easily altered as construction progresses.) Finally, concrete planters with flowering trees would be placed around the lot's outer edge so that, from the air, the ring of foliage would resemble a living wreath. Cobalt lighting and blue circular seating would facilitate viewing and reflection.

While raised platforms have been constructed above ground zero, Ms. Miss said

told Board 1. "In this way, every person who visits participates in a very direct manner by maintaining the wreath."

The board, which is familiar with the waterfront project Ms. Miss helped design in Battery Park City, unanimously endorsed her proposal.

"We're trying to figure out a way to handle the many people who want to visit and give them something meaningful to do to relate to the site, and I think this project is part of that process," district manager Paul Goldstein told *The Observer*.

"Mary's proposal is delicious. It would certainly enliven the area," said Liz Thompson, chairwoman of Board 1's new memorial-process committee and executive director of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. "The challenge is that many, many people are coming forward with proposals, and we're going to have to figure out some sort of process for dealing with this."

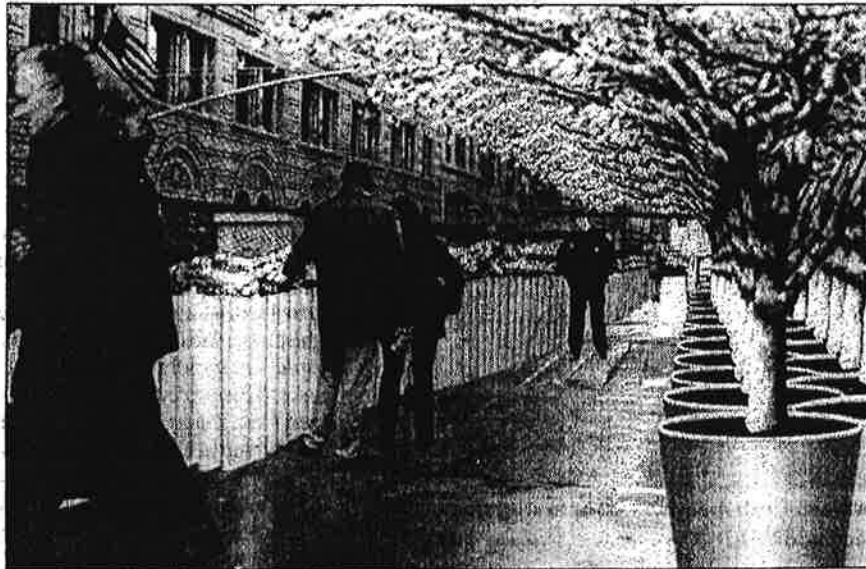
The Port Authority and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, a new subsidiary of the Empire State Development Corporation, will work together to beautify the edge of the site, said Charles Gargano, chairman of the development corporation and vice chairman of the Port Authority. He said the authority recently allocated \$10 million for temporary structures around the perimeter, although what those structures will look like is far from decided.

"All we're talking about is that we're doing something about it," said Mr. Gargano.

In the meantime, Ms. Miss won't wait on official approval to continue planning her project, although she said having Board 1's support was a big boost. She's already mapped the site, taken inventory and secured the help of New York Cares (a nonprofit service organization) to mobilize volunteers to paint the perimeter.

"I do almost only public art projects. I'm used to dealing with this kind of bureaucracy," Ms. Miss told *The Observer*. "We don't have time to wait. We need to change this edge now."

—Megan Costello



One of the artist's digitally altered photographs of ground zero's perimeter.

cleaning up her Greenwich Street apartment after leaving the windows open on Sept. 11. Since then, she's circulated her plan among local residents, firefighters, arts organizations, religious leaders and community groups. On Dec. 18, with the aid of a prepared statement and photographs that she digitally altered to incorporate her plan into the existing site, Ms. Miss presented her proposal at Board 1's public meeting.

First, Ms. Miss explained, she'd paint all existing fencing and scaffolding sky blue. Then she'd replace the concrete, chain-link

that her project would address not only people's compulsion to bear witness, but also their desire for ritual. She said that installing pipes that could be used to hold flowers would provide such a ritual element while upholding the dignity of the site, which, she told *The Observer*, was beginning to look "junky" from the haphazard offerings strewn around its edge.

"As it becomes known that everyone who visits should bring flowers to place around the perimeter, a permanent presence of color and life will be created," Ms. Miss

Jan. 3: Board 7, Rodeph Shalom, 7 West 83rd Street, 7 p.m., 362-4008; Board 10, YMCA, 180 West 135th Street, in the Little Theater, 6 p.m., 749-3105.

Jan. 9: Board 4, Hudson Guild Fulton Center, 119 Ninth Avenue, 6 p.m., 736-4536; Board 6, N.Y.U. Medical Center, 550 First Avenue, Classroom A, 7 p.m., 319-3750.