



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT, FUND FOR PUBLIC HEALTH ANNOUNCE THE NEW YORK CITY MURAL ARTS PROJECT

*Murals in the Bronx and Manhattan – developed
through community engagement – will address mental illness*

March 9, 2017 – The Health Department and the Fund for Public Health today announced a community-based project to create three public murals about mental health in East Tremont, West Bronx, and Hell’s Kitchen. The New York City Mural Arts Project is a collaborative effort between mental health consumers, artists, community-based organizations and the community at large. The two murals in the Bronx will be created by VIP Community Services and muralist Tova Snyder. The mural in Manhattan will be created by Fountain House Gallery and artist Andrew Frank Baer. The Mural Arts Project is part of the City’s effort to increase services and awareness about mental health, and aligns with First Lady Chirlane McCray’s goal to build social cohesion and reduce the stigma that continues to surround mental illness.

The Mural Arts Project will include a series of community activities over the next three months to engage the public in the mural making process and foster community conversations about mental health. This month, the artists will lead weekly workshops at community-based organizations to discuss ideas for the designs. The artists will then present a first draft of the mural and receive feedback from participants. In May, the project will culminate with two Community Paint Days, arts and wellness fairs where the public can paint the murals.

"The Mural Arts Project is an important investment and builds on the impact ThriveNYC has had improving our city's mental health infrastructure," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. "Art has the ability to profoundly change the way we think, feel, and even spark meaningful conversation to begin to break down the strongholds of isolation and stigma."

"The NYC Mural Arts Project is part of a citywide effort to take discussion of mental health from lectures to living rooms, creating the opportunity for a community conversation," said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. "Projects like this engage the community through discussion, thought, and action – ultimately reducing the stigma associated with mental illness."

"We are pleased to take part in this important effort to connect residents to community-based organizations, social centers, and art in order to bring mental illness out of the shadows and encourage New Yorkers to seek services to help them flourish," said **Sara Gardner, Executive Director of the Fund for Public Health in New York City**.

The final murals will be in East Tremont, West Bronx, and Hell’s Kitchen at locations to be determined.

The Mural Arts Project will host several open studio and design review events in the next month:

- Wednesday, March 15, 6-8 p.m., Fountain House Gallery, 702 9th Ave., Manhattan
- Tuesday, March 21, 5:30-7:30 p.m., VIP Community Services, 1870 Crotona Ave., Bronx **Design Review Event*
- Thursday, March 23, 6-8 p.m., Fountain House Gallery, 702 9th Ave., Manhattan **Design Review Event*
- Thursday, April 6, 6-8 p.m., Fountain House Gallery, 702 9th Ave., Manhattan
- Tuesday, April 11, 6-8 p.m., VIP Community Services, 1870 Crotona Ave., Bronx
- Friday, April 27, 4-6 p.m., Theater Arts Production Company (TAPCo), 2225 Webster Ave., Bronx

For further information and additional open studio dates, check the [Mural Arts Project Facebook page](#) or visit www.nycmap.org.

The Mural Arts Project steering committee includes members from the NYC Health Department, the Fund for Public Health, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, NYC Health + Hospitals, the Mayor's Office, VIP Community Services, Fountain House, Fountain House Gallery, Citiview Connections Clubhouse, Bronx Community Board 6, and Manhattan Community Board 4.

"The Mural Arts Project aligns with our mission to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness through art, and provides our artists with an opportunity to use their creative talents while connecting with the larger community," said **Ariel Willmott, Director of Fountain House Gallery**.

"VIP Community Services is very pleased to be a part of the New York City Mural Arts Project in collaboration with NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene. The conversation and interaction with the participants from our community is awesome. We have experienced 'healing and tranquility' coupled with 'no judgment.' We have heard wonderful comments from the community while engaged in coloring, painting and learning from the artist/muralist Tova Snyder. VIP Community Services thanks the Department of Health and Fund for Public Health for making this initiative available to the community," said **Carmen Rivera, Assistant Vice President of Communications and External Affairs, VIP Community Services**.

"Listening to other people's stories is healing, and instead of stereotyping people based on what they see or hear from television, people will get to see who we are," said **Cristian, a Bronx mural participant**.

Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried of Manhattan, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Health, said, "The Mural Arts Project will help promote awareness about the importance of mental health and help connect New Yorkers to community-based mental health organizations. I am thrilled that one of the first three murals will be created by an artist from Fountain House in Hell's Kitchen – an institution founded on the precept, 'We Are Not Alone,' a message embraced by the Mural Arts Project."

“This project can serve as a catalyst for more inclusive, honest and open discussion about mental health that too often is stigmatized. Connecting mental health to art through the Mural Arts Project will help visually elevate the conversation and beautify the community,” said **Council Member Ritchie Torres of the Bronx**.

About the Community Partners

Fountain House Gallery provides an environment for artists living and working with mental illness to pursue their creative visions and to challenge the stigma that surrounds mental illness.

VIP Community Services was founded in 1974 to provide social services in the Bronx. The nonprofit serves approximately 25,000 clients and patients annually through residential care, outpatient counseling, shelter care, medical services, housing and employment services.

About the Artists

Tova Snyder received a Master of Fine Arts from Temple University’s Tyler School of Art. Her work includes public and commercial murals, fresco painting and restoration. Her largest piece of public art is a six-story mural off the Grand Concourse in the Bronx.

Andrew Frank Baer studied fine art at Brooklyn College. His work has been shown in galleries in Washington, D.C. and New York City, and he has painted large murals in New York City.

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