

CREATIVETIME

Media Contact: Sarah Bacon
sarahb@creativetime.org
212.206.6674x205

MORE THAN 25 ARTISTS REFRESH NEW YORK CITY'S LEGENDARY CONEY ISLAND CYCLONE ROLLERCOASTER AND NUMEROUS ATTRACTIONS GET NEW SKIN



The Cyclone, painted by Steve Powers in April '04.

May 10, 2004: This summer on Saturday, June 12, Creative Time and artist **Steve Powers**, with the help of “Mayor” Dick Zigun of Coney Island USA, will unveil an unprecedented public art initiative in New York’s famed Coney Island. **The Dreamland Artist Club** features resurfaced rides, custom signs, amusement backdrops, and murals by more than twenty emerging and established artists at a range of Coney Island businesses, including The Cyclone, the Spider ride, the El Dorado Bumper Cars and Arcade, and Skin the Wire, to name a few.

The Dreamland Artist Club’s exceptional range of artistic styles and practices employs contemporary artists’ visions to renew, revive, and reinvent the tradition of colorful, hand-painted signage and advertisements dating back more than a century in Coney Island. Conceived by artist Steve Powers and curated with Creative Time’s Peter Eleey, *The Dreamland Artist Club* includes artists **Rita Ackermann, Jules de Balincourt, Craig Costello & Nathan Smith, Adam Cvijanovic, Derraindrop, Christa Donner, Nicole Eisenman, Daze Ellis, Gents of Desire, Toland Grinnell, Ellen Harvey, David Humphrey, Greg Lamarche, Matt Leines, Andrew Lenaghan, Katrin Jurati, Ashley Macomber, Ryan McGinness, Bill McMullen, Morning Breath (Doug Cunningham and Jason Noto), Jack Pierson, Steve Powers, Dana Schutz, Matt Silver and SSUR**, who will create site-specific works to help transform the eroded visual character of Coney Island. The artists’ projects will be located throughout the amusement district, with a concentration along Jones Walk and the Bowery. *The Dreamland Artist Club*, presented in association with Coney Island USA, will refresh the once world-renowned watering hole for live entertainment, wonderment, and excess. The

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area's once legendary spectacle will no longer, as local historian Charles Denson said, "exist for most in [the public's] imagination."

THE DREAMLAND ARTIST CLUB

JUNE 12 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 6, 2004

Unlike many historic New York neighborhoods in the last decade, Coney Island has yet to undergo a major redevelopment (with the exception of the construction of Keyspan Park and the renovation of the boardwalk.) Due largely to its far-flung geographical location, the skyrocketing value of Manhattan real-estate over the last century, and urban renewal under several mayors resulting in the development of acres of housing projects, Coney Island was neglected by the metropolitan landmark preservation movement until the 1970s, when most of the Victorian bathing palaces and carnivalesque amusements of its heyday had already been razed or burned to the ground. The once world-famous resort; predecessor to Las Vegas; birthplace of American middle-class leisure entertainment, and known, among numerous monikers, as the "Most Famous Playground on Earth," "The Electric City," "Sodom by the Sea," and "The Funny Place," inspired artists of all disciplines including Weegee, Walker Evans, Woody Allen, and Rem Koolhaas. Now, Coney Island maintains only vestigial glory in sundry attractions such as sideshows, rides, a few arcades, and boardwalk culture.

Named for the famous amusement park in Coney Island that burned down in 1911, *The Dreamland Artist Club* began in the Spring of 2003 when Powers, Creative Time and Dick Zigun of Coney Island USA teamed up to invite a group of artists and businesses in Coney Island's amusement area to work together. Sign iconography and outdoor painting had always featured into Powers's work and, as a long-time admirer of hand-painted signs, Powers looked to Coney Island as one of the fading examples of the tradition. "Coney Island," he said, "is the most beautiful place in New York City, and we are dedicated to keeping it that way." During his numerous visits to the neighborhood, Powers had discovered that much of the business and amusement signage was significantly weathered or simply absent. With the support of Dick Zigun—the cultural leader of the community—Powers painted marquees for the Eldorado Arcade and Puzzles Bar. Zigun introduced Powers and Creative Time to other Coney Island businesses, often held for generations in one family, with the proposition to work collaboratively with artists to refresh their properties.

Powers and Creative Time sought artists, primarily painters and designers—disciplines that do not often have the opportunity to work in the public domain—whose backgrounds and styles indicated a potential personal, social, or aesthetic interest in the visual culture of Coney Island. For example, **Toland Grinnell** is a Brooklyn native with a childhood passion for the area; he is contributing a sign for the Dime Toss. **Ellen Harvey** has a history of working collaboratively with proprietors of public venues; she is repainting the interior of a spiritual reader's booth in baroque décor. **Daze Ellis** and **Gents of Desire** come from a graffiti and street background that so often finds such public painting opportunities first; Ellis is creating a mural on the back of a shish-kabob stand while Gents of Desire painted a wallscape advertisement for a clam bar. **Dearraindrop**, **Ryan McGinness**, **Dana Schutz**, **David Humphrey**, **Jules de Balincourt**, and **Nicole Eisenman** all employ playful iconography and palettes that are well suited to Coney's wry and exuberant visual character. Dearraindrop is creating a 50-foot backdrop for the Spider ride; McGinness is designing a 135-foot arcade marquee with 34 different icons; Schutz is painting two large signs for the Shooting Gallery; Humphrey is painting a marquee for the Water Gun Race; de Balincourt is painting signs for an ice cream booth and the Track Derby game; and Eisenman is creating a marquee for Skin the Wire.

Even though the practice of commercial hand-painted signage is largely in decline due to the relative affordability and speed of today's digital output techniques, many contemporary artists have adopted its forms and styles. Engaging ideas about visual communication and semiotics, and craft versus mass production, several *Dreamland* artists are appropriating the idiom of commercial advertising, conflating text-based signage with scenic backdrops and, in doing so, expanding the possibilities of signage beyond its commercial function. While Coney no longer hosts "New York State's largest ballroom," sea lions in artificial lagoons, "Human Roulette," night bathing, a Bavarian Village, little Venice, or the public viewing of human deformities (which was banned in the '50s), its enticements remain arcane. Rather than follow the model of "corporate Disneyfication," which has smoothed the rough elegance of so many American neighborhoods, *The Dreamland Artist Club* will

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infuse Coney Island with a sampling of this era's artistry and imagination, proposing a new model of creative revitalization strategies to preserve the existing characters of urban neighborhoods.

MEMBERS OF THE CLUB

Rita Ackermann painted a 50-foot mural next to the Wonder Wheel sign on Jones Walk. Ackermann moved from Budapest to New York in 1991, where she is represented by Andrea Rosen Gallery. She has been featured in numerous museum exhibitions in the United States, Japan and Europe. She is also a member of the band *Angelblood*.

Jules de Balincourt painted two marquees for this project—one for Ice Cream To Go on Jones Walk and the other for a track derby on the Bowery. Born in Paris, de Balincourt's sculptures and paintings have been exhibited in the United States and Europe. He lives and works in Brooklyn, and is represented by LFL Gallery, New York.

Craig Costello & Nathan Smith painted the backdrop and several signs for Shoot the Freak on Coney Island's famed Boardwalk. Costello's paintings and photographs have appeared in numerous publications, agnes b.'s Paris and New York spaces, and the *Beautiful Losers* exhibit at the CAC in Cincinnati. Smith's works were recently exhibited at Priska Juska Fine Arts in Brooklyn. Both artists live in Brooklyn.

Adam Cvijanovic created a marquee for a water race on the Bowery. Known for large-scale landscape paintings and other scenes, Cvijanovic's works have been exhibited in group and solo exhibitions internationally. Cvijanovic lives and works in Brooklyn, and is represented by Bellwether Gallery, New York.

Dearraindrop, an artist collective consisting of Billy Grant, Laura Grant, Joe Grillo and Alika Herreshoff, painted a 50-foot backdrop and signs for the Spider ride on West 12th Street. The group has shown their work in Japan, Chicago and at John Connelly Presents, New York. They have a show at Deitch Projects, New York in July 2004.

Christa Donner, whose large-scale wall drawings, comics and workshops often explore issues of women's health and body image, painted a marquee for Feed the Clown on Jones Walk. Her work has been shown in several group and solo exhibitions. Donner lives in Chicago and is represented by Kravets-Wehby Gallery, New York.

Nicole Eisenman makes drawings, paintings, and large-scale murals. For Dreamland, she painted a marquee for Skin the Wire on Jones Walk. Eisenman is a Guggenheim Foundation fellow and has works in many major museum collections. She shows with the Leo Koenig Gallery, New York, where she recently presented *Elizaville*.

Daze Ellis, who painted a mural on the back of Lambros Quality Food on the corner of West 12th Street and the Bowery, began writing graffiti in the mid 70's. He has exhibited around the world and has work in several public collections, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Ellis lives and works in New York.

Gents of Desire, Los Angeles-based Jonathan Bleser (FINN) and Alexis Ross (DOOM), painted the Clam Bar on West 12th Street at the Boardwalk and lettered inside the Eldorado Bumper Car hall. They also collaborated with Matt Leines on the tattoo parlor marquee on Jones Walk and with Steve Powers on Gregory + Paul's wall at West 10th Street and Surf Avenue. Gents specialize in the "Touch of Class" look and immaculate haircuts.

Toland Grinnell, a Brooklyn native with a childhood passion for Coney Island, created a sign for the Dime Toss on Jones Walk. Grinnell has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions in New York, where he is represented by the Mary Boone Gallery, as well as throughout Europe.

Ellen Harvey, a New York-based English artist, painted a custom interior and marquee for the spiritual reader's booth on Jones Walk. Harvey has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and Europe, and created numerous public projects, including *The New York Beautification Project*. Harvey is represented by müllerdechiara gallery, Berlin.

David Humphrey painted the marquee for the water gun race on the corner of Surf Avenue and Jones Walk. Humphrey, also a curator and occasional critic, has exhibited throughout the United States and Europe, and his work is in several public collections. Humphrey lives and works in New York, where he is represented by Brent Sikkema Gallery.

Katrin Jurati, a Los Angeles-based artist, painted the marquee for the balloon dart game on the Bowery. Her work is inspired by the narrative and scenic juxtaposition of urban spaces. This year

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she has exhibited in Los Angeles, San Antonio and Norway.

Greg Lamarche painted the tunnel, assisted by Darrell Dulude, between Deno's Kiddie Park and the Wonder Wheel, as well as a marquee for the balloon water race on Jones Walk. Lamarche, a New York artist, designer, and graffiti writer, has work in many private and public collections, and has upcoming exhibitions in Montreal, San Francisco and St. Paul.

Matt Leines, who paints, sculpts, and draws, collaborated with Gents of Desire on the marquee for the Jones Walk tattoo parlor. Leines lives and works in New Jersey, and is represented by New Image Art, Los Angeles. His work was recently featured in *Majority Whip* at White Box, New York.

Andrew Lenaghan, a Brooklyn resident, painted the marquee for a water gun game on Jones Walk. Lenaghan has participated in group exhibitions throughout the United States, and had solo exhibitions at the George Adams Gallery, New York.

Ashley Macomber painted a sign for a computer portrait booth on Jones Walk. Macomber has been included in several group exhibitions and featured in *Flaunt* and *Loyal* magazines. She had a solo show at New Image Art, Los Angeles and has an upcoming solo show at Verdana Gallery, Chicago.

Ryan McGinness, a New York-based artist, created a 135-foot marquee with 34 different icons for an arcade on the corner of Surf Avenue and Jones Walk. McGinness has exhibited throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia, and shows with Deitch Projects, New York. His project is generously sponsored by Nike.

Bill McMullen, who designed several of the promotional materials for *Dreamland*, painted the sign for Fun Candy on Jones Walk. McMullen was an Art Director at Def Jam Records and is a founder and co-owner of SwishNYC, a clothing and product line. McMullen regularly designs for clients including The Beastie Boys, Criterion Collection and MTV. *His project was generously supported by Nike.*

Morning Breath (Doug Cunningham and Jason Noto) painted two marquees on the Bowery. These 2004 Grammy Award nominees have shown in the United States and abroad, and have been featured in numerous magazines. Cunningham created a children's book and an animated film that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. Noto has produced work for clients including Dreamworks, Interscope, and Island/Def Jam Records.

Jack Pierson created the sign *SOMEDAY* for Jones Walk. Pierson, who lives and works in New York and California, has been the subject of museum shows at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Sprengel Museum, Germany; among others. He was included in the *2004 Whitney Biennial* and is represented by Cheim & Read, New York and Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

Steve Powers, who conceived of *Dreamland*, created signs for numerous venues in the amusement area and painted the cars of the Cyclone rollercoaster. Powers authored *The Art of Getting Over*, and was represented in the *2001 Venice Biennale* and the *Liverpool Biennial, 2002*. In July 2004, an exhibit of his work will be at Deitch Projects, New York.

Dana Schutz painted two large signs for the Shooting Gallery on the Bowery. Schutz, who lives in New York and is represented by LFL Gallery, has had solo shows of her work in Cleveland, Boston and Paris.

Matt Silver, an unemployed sign writer from Brooklyn, painted the Bushel Baskets sign on Jones Walk.

SSUR (Ruslan Karablin) is an artist and designer who shows his work internationally. For *Dreamland*, SSUR created pieces on West 12th Street above Puzzles Bar and the Coney Island Museum. SSUR also designs for both the fashion and music industries, in addition to curating several artist exhibitions.

ABOUT CREATIVE TIME

As New York City's most adventurous non-profit public arts presenter, Creative Time has taken arts of all disciplines by international artists virtually everywhere in the cityscape over the last 32 years. From the landmark Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage and Times Square to artist-designed skywriting, fireworks and *Tribute in Light*, the lauded temporary light memorial to September 11, 2001 in the skies over Manhattan, Creative Time delights and provokes millions each year. www.creativetime.org.

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