

# Time Out New York Kids

Summer 2004

## Coney Island on my mind

**N**obody under 12 (okay, nobody under 50) has experienced the pleasures of Coney Island in its heyday, when Steeplechase and Luna Park were heralded as America's most fabulous amusement destinations. We still love the place, but it's hard to find evidence of its glorious past among the fried-food chains and video arcades that now decorate Surf Avenue.

This summer, a team of artists have banded together to spruce up the boardwalk with a series of projects—collectively called *The Dreamland Artist Club*—that pay tribute to the old Coney Island aesthetic. More than 20 artists, including Jules de Balincourt, Nicole Eisenman, Toland Grinnell, Ellen Harvey, Jack Pierson and others, are busy making murals, signs and large-scale installations for such un-artworldly venues as Astroland, Eldorado Disco Bumper Cars and Jones Walk.

The project is sponsored by Creative Time, a nonprofit that facilitates offbeat public art projects throughout the city, but it is the brainchild of Steve Powers, a contemporary artist whose paintings often appropriate the quirky retro look of hand-painted signs found in places like Coney Island. "I moved to New York on August 1, 1994," says Philadelphia-born Powers, "and on August 2nd, I came down

here and got on the Cyclone." Ten years later, Powers is fulfilling his dream of putting a fresh coat of paint on the cars of the 76-year-old roller coaster, a jazzy composition of red, yellow, blue and white. Nearby, the Spider is getting a face-lift from Derraindrop, a psychedelic-loving collaborative from Providence, Rhode Island, and artist Ryan McGuinness is creating a 130-foot painting for Jones Walk.

Powers got the full cooperation of local businesses—with the help of Dick Zigun, the unofficial mayor of Coney Island and founder of the Coney Island Museum—and many were surprised by how much the artists appreciated the original Coney Island designs, now deteriorated and in serious need of repair. "The guy who owns the Spider thought they should just paint over the whole thing," says Powers, "but Derraindrop said, 'No, it's cool, we'll just add on top of what's already there.'"

While such monuments as Deno's Wonder Wheel will remain as is, Powers anticipates that the project will continue next year, transforming and restoring the glories of Coney Island, one ride at a time. —Barbara Pollack

**Dreamland Artist Club opens June 12. For information, call 212-206-6674 or find the map at [www.creativetime.org](http://www.creativetime.org).**

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