



Art exhibit inspired by High Line that will become a park

MEATPACKING DISTRICT The High Line — an abandoned elevated rail stretching from Gansevoort Street to 34th Street — will soon be transformed into an urban park.

To bid farewell to the wild plants, train remnants and graffiti that have taken root here over the last two decades — and to welcome the forthcoming walkways, modern lighting and lily ponds — Creative Time, an arts organization that mounts exhibits in neglected spaces, opened “The Plain of Heaven” in an empty factory at 820 Washington St. to display the work of 14 artists.

“This is a transitional moment before the reopening of the High Line,” said

On the line

- “The Plain of Heaven” is on view through Nov. 20, 12 - 6 p.m. Friday - Sunday.
- Friends of the High Line expects groundbreaking by the end of the year and completion by 2010. METRO

Anne Pasternak, president and artistic director of Creative Time.

“We have a fantasy of this as an urban prairie, but that fantasy will no longer be by the time the public has access to this space,” Pasternak said. “It’s going to be something else — and it has to be because it’s not safe [structurally] right now for the public.”



ADAM CIVILANOVIC'S “The Union Pacific Main Line” is one of the works by 14 artists at an exhibit at 820 Washington St. The show was inspired by the High Line, above right.

Friends of the High Line, a community group that has been lobbying to preserve the structure since 1999, secured \$71.6 million this summer in city and federal funds for the new park designed by Field Operations and Diller, Scofidio + Renfro. Robert Hammond, co-founder of the group, said city approvals are in place to start the project; they’re still waiting for the final agreement to transfer the rail to the city from its current owner, CSX railroad.

“Hopefully, the agreement will be signed in the next few days,” he said.

The factory, which still has meat hooks on the ceiling, “looks like it would make a great club,” said Brian August, 44, a lawyer who lives and works in the area. August, whose friends used to trespass and go jogging on the High Line’s “quiet and uninterrupted” trail, looked forward to the renovation. “It’ll be cool up here and underneath, too. I can imagine all these ven-



dors and weird arty things going on, like a carnival.”

Elizabeth Beer, 40, a fashion designer, thinks the project will “change the way architecture is generated” in the city. “A lot of parks along the city’s edges feel like they’re developer-driven; they feel applied to the city rather than created organically. This is driven by something else”: artists and people who care about preserving the space.

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