

New artwork goes up along the West Broadway Corridor

Written by Erin Jerabek
Sunday, 10 June 2012 00:00



In continued efforts to revitalize and beautify the spaces along Broadway Avenue, a new mural has gone up.

Northside muralist, illustrator and teacher Melodee Strong has created a 15 foot wide and 20 foot high work at 1417 W. Broadway for property and business owners Michael and Doris Spicer of Dimensions in Hair Beauty and Barber Shop.

The eye-catching mural depicts North Minneapolis residents in neighborhood scenes including a mother and daughter bicycling, women enjoying a cup of coffee, youth playing basketball and residents waiting for the bus. The backdrop of this artist deemed “multi-cultural kaleidoscope” mural for which Strong is known is the Minneapolis skyline as seen from Heritage Park in North Minneapolis.

Strong has designed more than fourteen public art installations throughout the Twins Cities, however this is her first piece located in the neighborhood she proudly calls home.

Growing up in rural Minnesota, Strong said she felt isolated and disconnected from her neighbors. She said North Minneapolis has since proved to be a place where she feels strongly

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connected to her neighborhood and community.

Strong is an award-winning artist and illustrator best known for her illustrations for the children's book, *A Colorful World*.

"I have had several moms stop me and thank me for my work in *A Colorful World*," said Strong. "One mom said, 'my daughter connects with your book. She has a disability and your book has helped her to feel included.'

Strong is currently contracted by several suburban school districts to teach a program called "Artdentity." The focus of Artdentity is to use art to empower youth to understand their identities and to think about where their places are in their families, schools and communities. The program pushes youth to think about diversity, equality, how to be part of a diverse community.

"Many white students don't think they have culture," said Strong. "They are disconnected from the idea that white culture exists. It is important to understand one's own culture and identity to fully understand how to be part of a diverse and inclusive community."

Strong said through her work she wants to provide a social, political, and cultural voice for a group of people that may be misunderstood, misrepresented, and stereotyped.

Strong's mural at Dimensions in Hair on the West Broadway Corridor is one of four recent storefront art installations by Northside artists. Other installations include an aluminum floral mural by Souliyahn

Keobounpheng at 1021 W. Broadway Ave., a mural at 1108 W. Broadway Ave. created by

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Juxtaposition Arts youth and a historic photography installation by Alissa Pier at 400 W. Broadway Ave. These murals were funded in partnership with the businesses/property owners, the West Broadway Business and Area Coalition, the City of Minneapolis and the Northside Funders Collective. Four additional art installations will be unveiled later this summer.

You can check out Melodee's work and connect with her at <http://www.facebook.com/MelodeeStrongArt> or http://web.me.com/melodee_strong/illustration/Home.html