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Mural makes noise

By A JOURNAL NEWS EDITORIAL

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If it's public art, does that mean the public has to like it?

Recent dialogue, or maybe more accurately wrangling, has raised this and similar questions since a mural along Congers Road in New City took shape.

Join the discussion

Talk about your impressions of the "Rockland 11" mural on Congers Road. Visit the Clarkstown forum on LoHud.com.

"The Rockland 11 mural," so named because 11 local artists participated with varied views and contributions to the whole, was painted during the first weekend in June. Keep Rockland Beautiful Inc., a nonprofit affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, sponsored the project. Clarkstown Supervisor Alex Gromack, in fact, engaged KRB in an effort to spruce up the drab retaining wall. The mural idea came up, and it stuck. Andy Golub, chairman of the Rockland County Art in Public Places Committee, curated the event.

This was no fly-by-night operation, nor was it some kind of "stealth" project. A banner hung over the site a week or so before, announcing an event there. An article in The Journal News described the mural to come, with information listed on when and where the event would take place.

The artists had the permission and support of the town. The county, as well, had been made aware of the project, because Congers Road is a county road.

Resistance vs. embrace

Some have had a visceral reaction to the concept of street art. It looks like the Bronx, critics say. After all, many Rocklanders have roots in the borough. Their definition of success is leaving urban and being suburban.

Some question what the 11 artists painted, from pastoral scenes to a Katrina-inspired ode to New Orleans. What some see as political others view as historical.

Some worry about maintenance, even as KRB has committed to keep tabs on it.

Some find the varied works a hodge-podge; some say certain panels are ugly. If it's pleasing to every viewer, most likely it's not art.

Many others have saluted the effort and praised the artists and town.

Many of the reasons cited by critics for removal - for example, it's too "controversial" - are the same reasons why it should stay. The mural certainly has started a dialogue. In public and private art, that usually portends success.
