

A Boy From the Bronx

An Art Miles Mural Project – Shoes of Hope Story

“Media men” have a certain pose. They stand to their tallest height, cameras and tripods weighing them down, maybe in a little pain, but all the same looking strong and ready, not willing to look as if their tools were a burden. “Media Women” have a different pose. They are usually lagging behind with coils of cable, or talking loudly into their recorders or furiously jotting down notes. Then there are others out there-- fingers pointing, matching clothes, perfect camera skin and hands flailing about in multiple directions as if to point to the air above or in between objects and personalities.



All of that was present as guests began to arrive. Fish people (little children from New York’s Chinatown), scurried furiously to find their space center stage as the wind blew from the East River up and over the slate tiles, ablaze with

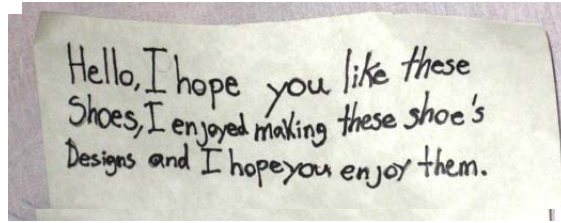
Ranan Lurie’s “Uniting Painting” and a thousand pairs of hand painted Starbury Shoes skimming alongside in vibrant happy colors and designs containing messages of peace and environmental concerns.



I stood there watching the scene unfold as the UN flag waved with the winds blowing off the shore of the river, sun shining brightly, and only a whisper of a cloud above. A ribbon of color was wound atop and through several levels of stairway and the waving pattern of color fused with the summer light, was actually formed by

lines of shoes and the scene was breathtaking. Rainbows of colors brought the Lurie Painting alive, as if each shoe, each painter was inspired by the pathway this painting represented. From the inside of the UN itself, out the building, across the plaza and into and out again from the East River to Roosevelt Island.

Inside the shoes, were special messages tucked deep inside the shoes to children far away, written by those who painted them. The notes were personal and powerful, sharing thoughts of things in common, pain and hurt, of peace, environment and climate change.



I watched with interest how the media men and media women transformed, like ducks in a pond, swimming and paddling furiously following their Matron, shifting right and left, and left and right, to herald the arrival of Bindi Erwin and an ice carved Polar Bear. A throng of school children and the media surrounded Bindi as she and her mother read about environment and appealing for all to join the race to seek help seek resolutions about "Climate Change". The circle around Bindi grew thicker and wider, until all that could be seen was water from the symbolic bear melting from its iced form into what represented the melting glaciers somewhere far away.

But somewhere on the flagstone surface, outside the high rise buildings and the UN Secretariat, there stood a child from the Bronx. A few days earlier, he had painted a pair of Starbury Shoes, one of a thousand pairs of shoes donated by famous New York Knicks basketball star, Stephon Marbury and today, with his teacher and some members of his classroom, he watched them being placed and aligned along the magnificent Lurie Painting, his eyes following it's path, blazing with happiness and joy.



Suddenly, from the far left corner, he caught sight of a tall handsome man in a suit, surrounded by a flurry of other young handsome men in suits and a gaggle of security people. It only took about 30 seconds for him to recognize who it was and his happiness and joy simply erupted into a whooping, laughing, giggling utterance of glee, with sounds unheard in this normally

sedate and serious place. "Stephon Marbury" himself! His hero, there before him, walking along the plaza, looking at shoes...his shoes! His body tumbled into a somersault,

propelled by the sheer joy that burst from his heart and he raced to embrace and hug his hero with all the might his youthful soul could extend. Even the security staff could not react to this “explosion of joy”.

My soul stirred, and suddenly Bindi and the crowd around her were eclipsed by this magical moment of human emotion—from a Boy from the Bronx and a man of goodwill—Stephon Marbury—the giver of the “Shoes of Hope”, a true humanitarian and a man true to a commitment to help kids by being a mentor, a hero, and in my eyes a true kindred spirit.



By Joanne Tawfilis June 9, 2007