

What a Gas!

Jennifer Marsh has pulled off a minor miracle: getting drivers to smile about a gas station. Just past Nottingham Plaza on East Colvin Street, motorists slow down to get a better look at what used to be a gray eyesore. It has been completely transformed by a quilt as bright as an Inca blanket. For a moment drivers forget about problems like the price of crude and gape in wonder. Marsh originally planned to create a crocheted cozy for a barn but was inspired to make a more political statement when she drove by this abandoned Citgo station.

Wrap sheet: The corner of East Colvin and Nottingham Road is more colorful after artist Jennifer Marsh and local students held a quilting bee.

Rose Stoll of Syracuse was on her way to the grocery store but stopped to stare. She came back to take pictures. Nidia Lopez of Solvay returned on foot to check out the attraction. She told her friends, "I'm not crazy, I swear. I almost got in an accident driving by. Am I really seeing this?" Samantha and Mackenzie from LeMoyne Elementary had their mother bring them by to check out the project, especially the square created by third-graders at their 1528 Le Moyne Ave. school.

Covering the building was a bigger job than you might think. Work began on what Marsh called the WRAP or World Reclamation Art Project, back in May 2007. Her International Fiber Collaborative received help from thousands of others both locally and from around the country and even the world. Organizations donated time, money and materials. Participants designed and created fabric panels, then mailed them to Marsh who joined, reinforced and waterproofed them. Local students from Roberts, Seymour Magnet, Ed Smith, Danforth Middle, Van Duyn, LeMoyne and Henninger High School all helped. Getting the finished quilt in place was yet another undertaking. Scaffolding and a couple of cherry pickers were needed to reach high enough to work on the 35-foot-tall structure.

Artists made their squares from cotton, burlap, nylon, even plastic grocery bags. Cloth covers nearly every inch of the former gas station, right down to the hoses and pumps. Designs on the squares range from zig-zags, hand-prints and hearts to political commentary. One shows a cheery cherry-colored whale swallowing a green sedan. A dead duck in a black puddle kicks his legs up in another. A few carry messages like: "NO PETROL PRODUCTS ARE IN THIS SQUARE" and "THIS IS IT." One doomsday message features a graph and some floating dollar signs. The line on the graph is cut off abruptly, presumably by some cataclysm.

This ambitious project combines aspects of two world-famous works: Christo's wrapping of the Reichstag and the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Like Christo's work, the audacity of the WRAP's scale makes it difficult to ignore. Like the AIDS Memorial Quilt, it is the result of cumulative



community effort and passionate personal feeling. Innovation and cooperation at this level are inspiring—maybe there *is* something we can do about the world's problems. . .

The WRAP can be found at 2301 E. Colvin St., near Drumlins. A reception will be held there on Saturday, May 3, 5 to 8 p.m. Musician Hanna Richardson will perform and food will be provided by Conella's BBQ. For more information, go to www.internationalfibercollaborative.com.

—Jon Dufort

Did you enjoy this article? Please share it!



Close Window