

Talking With: Jen Stark and Making Her Surf Lodge Mural

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by Scott Bluedorn

The Surf Lodge on Edgemere Road in Montauk has recently initiated a new artist-in-residence program. Although the artists may not be staying on site (in a lavish beach bungalow on Fort Pond), they are given a room in which to install a small exhibition.

In the case of the Lodge's initial artist-in-residence, Jen Stark, the exterior facade of the building itself was also offered as a canvas on which to work.

Working under the sponsorship of East Hampton gallerist Eric Firestone, Stark worked with several assistants and a motorized lift to transform the southwest exterior of the hotel into a signature tableau of vibrant, multi-hued bands of color resembling a rainbow—even gaining the attention of East Hampton Town code enforcement in the process. But more on that later.



Installation shot of outdoor mural by Jen Stark. Photo: Alex DeJulio.

Scott Bluedorn of Hamptons Art Hub recently asked the artist a few questions about the project:

HAH!: Briefly, where does your work come from?

JS: I'm inspired by all types of things, from plants to the universe, microscopic designs in nature, color, and mystery. I love geometric shapes and how they apply to lots of designs in nature and try to emulate this in my work.

HAH!: What are the challenges and pleasures of outdoor mural painting?

JS: The usual challenge with outdoor painting is the weather. At times it can be very cold and windy—especially if you're up on a lift. And other times the sun can be baking you or it can start raining. It's very gratifying, though, accomplishing such a large mural and having an end result to all the hard work.

HAH!: How does the mural work relate to your gallery work? Is scale important?

JS: The work I show in galleries is typically sculptures, which are pretty different than the drippy murals. They both have similarities though, with the psychedelic colors, intricacy and layers. My work and ideas react to whatever surface it is on, so scale is definitely important. I like the artwork

to make sense with the object—whether it be a building or a pedestal, so I'll adjust my work and ideas to fit.

HAH!: What is it like working with Eric Firestone and The Surf Lodge in this unique collaboration?

JS: It was great working with Eric and the Surf Lodge for this project. They made sure I had everything I needed to get the job done. They gave me lots of freedom to do whatever I wanted on the building as well as inside the gallery space.

HAH!: What's next for you?

JS: I just illustrated the latest July cover of Cosmopolitan Magazine that just came out—which is pretty different for me, but still lots of fun. I live in Los Angeles and just moved into a new art studio in Chinatown, which is very inspiring and exciting. I'll also be in a group show at Eric Firestone's gallery in July.

Jen Stark's work will be on view at the Surf Lodge Gallery through June 28, 2015. To read a review of the exhibition and installation, click [here](#).

As for the mural, in response to a complaint from a neighbor, a summons was issued on May 22, 2015 based on one count of violating the town code, which requires approval from the Architectural Review Board for signage and exterior changes to a building.

According to reporting on easthamptonstar.com, Thomas W. Horn, the attorney for Surf Lodge, said that when code enforcement agents arrived at the hotel and nightclub they weren't sure at first what the violation was and had to make a phone call before writing the ticket.

Surf Lodge director of operations Julien Bizalio argued before Justice Steven Tekulsky that Stark's mural is "a signed art piece, and it's temporary," according to the same report. But the town's attorney, Michael Sendlenski, said that the town was prepared to go to trial, which could result in a \$1,000 fine, and the next court date was set for June 26, 2015.

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