

Trucking along with the Mobile Art Project

Street Art

By GREG COOK | August 12, 2009

When the Hera Gallery left its customary perch on Main Street in Wakefield last fall for a time, artist and curator Viera Levitt started thinking of ways to bring art back to the heart of South County. She struck upon the idea of the Mobile Art Project and this week it's hitting the road with stops in West Kingston, Peace Dale, and Providence.

"It just seemed exciting to do something moving and dynamic," Levitt says.

With funding from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts and New Jersey's Puffin Foundation, she is renting a 16-foot-long box truck, hanging a project banner on the side, temporarily installing benches in the back, covering the translucent roof with blue foil, and presenting a sound piece by China Blue titled *Aqua Alta*.

Blue, of Warwick, used hydrophone arrays and seismic microphones to record around and under the waters of Providence's canals and Narragansett Bay. A two-minute sample on the project web site sounds like a collage of bubbles, rushing water, a rattling metallic hum, gulls cawing, and high-pitched squeals that might be some marine creature.

Blue has said her piece was inspired by global warming and "echoes the ebb and flow of water on our planet. The same water that washes the canals of Venice, breaks at the feet of the Statue of Liberty, and runs through the canals of Providence. It rises up and rains down. It is as ordinary as it is threatening." A representative from Providence-based environmental group Save the Bay will accompany the truck part of the time to elaborate on these ecological themes.

Levitt came to Providence from her native Slovakia in 2002 as part of a curatorial exchange program with Rhode Island School of Design. While here, she met Marc Levitt, who records the Action Speaks! radio program at AS220. A long-distance relationship ensued that led to their marriage in 2005. She's been living here since 2006 and organizing art exhibitions like a survey of central European video art at the University of Rhode Island and an interactive sound installation by the Hungarian-Slovak artist Ilona Nemeth at AS220 last year.

This isn't the first time she's mixed art and transportation. In 2000, she helped curate an art installation aboard a train in Slovakia. And the URI show included video loops screened at the Kingston Train Station.

This time around, Levitt says, "the idea is to go to artistically underserved communities in southern Rhode Island." Stops include the Courthouse Center for the Arts in West Kingston beginning August 14 at 6:30 pm; AS220's Foo Fest on Empire Street in Providence on August 15 from 1 to 5:30 pm; and the Peace Dale Village Green on August 16 at 5 pm. She'll announce additional stops — like the beach — at vieralevitt.org/mobileartproject.htm.

Then she'll have to return the truck. But Levitt aims to get out on the road again in September. And she dreams of what she could do with, say, an ice cream truck.