

# A Banner Year for a Celebration

Mary Coy

A century's worth of existence is certainly worth celebrating. And so our village of Webster, New York, celebrated its centennial this year with the usual festivities of music, food, historical displays, photos, newspaper articles, and congratulatory declarations. As part of the local celebration, town officials invited the school district's students to create artwork for a public display.



While participation in art exhibits and contests can be very rewarding for all involved, people unfamiliar with art education may not understand the time and preparation it takes to create quality work and prepare it for exhibition. What helped our department of twenty art teachers easily accept this request was the six-month lead time given to prepare, the support provided by town officials, and the excitement of knowing our students' work would also be turned into banners and displayed throughout the community for an entire year.

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Before starting the project, the art faculty was given a written history of our village along with historic photo references for our students. Each teacher decided how their students would pursue this project—through regular classroom projects, art club, or independent study. Five pieces were to be submitted per teacher to the art exhibit. From those, town officials chose fifty pieces (at least two per teacher), photographed them, and turned them into banners.

The work submitted was varied and accurately reflected the history of our community and the artistic skills within our schools. High-school ceramics students created clay relief tiles of architec-

tural motifs found on the historic buildings in the village. Others created digital illustrations based on old photos showing life years ago—street lamps lining a quaint street, blacksmiths working their trade, important figures in our village's history.

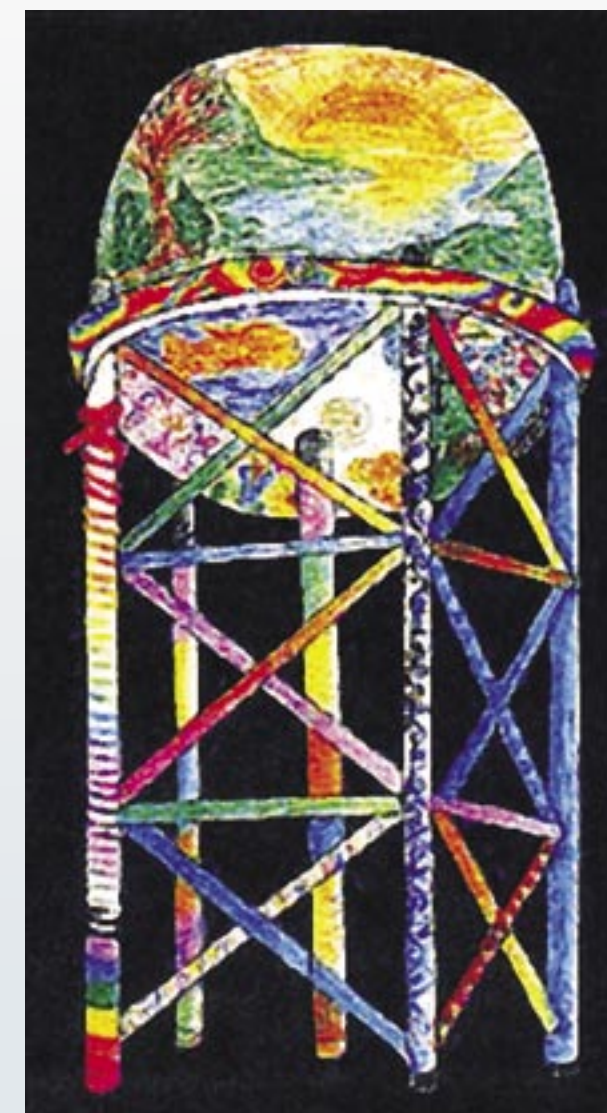
Middle-school students redesigned the two water towers down the street from school. Three-foot tall drawings of water towers covered with farm scenes, sunsets on Lake Ontario, and ice cream cones from their favorite local stand proved more visually exciting than the pale blue they were actually painted.

Others took a walking tour of the neighborhood with their teacher and applied their newly learned perspective skills to architectural renderings of the village church and local cobblestone house. Two elementary artists drew their interpretation of the many apple trees in the area and the old town trolley with an innocence that mirrored the small-town feel that still exists in much of this rapidly expanding community.

## Banners Revealed

Winters are long up here on Lake Ontario. The suspense of whose artwork would be hanging in the village come spring was palpable. "When are the banners going up?" and "Whose artwork was chosen?" were two questions I frequently heard. As the snow gradually melted and the sun appeared earlier each day, the village readied itself for a new season. Flowers were planted, flags hung, the art exhibit was held, and banners magically appeared one day to the excitement of folks who pass through our village every day.

To see artwork created within our classrooms hanging beside Old



left page: Fourth-grader James Dorman's work celebrates our annual fireworks display.

right page: Lauren Cronk's water tower depicts a sunset on Lake Ontario as well as other colorful motifs.

## NATIONAL STANDARD

Students use themes, subjects, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks.

Glory on a flagpole along Main Street is a great feeling and a lovely sight. And certainly a great way to celebrate not only history and community, but student learning as well. ☺

Mary Coy is an art teacher at Spry Middle School in Webster, New York and a contributing editor for SchoolArts. [MaryCoy@rochester.rr.com](mailto:MaryCoy@rochester.rr.com)