

**Press Release: ‘Art? ...is Our Life’ Mural Unveiling
Promoting Positive and Legal Graffiti Art in Toronto
A.R.T.E.R.Y. Youth Program**



**Mural Unveiling Ceremony
12:00 pm, Monday, August 18, 2008
North East corner of Spadina and Dupont (Directly outside Dupont Station)**

Title: Art Is Our Life

Artists: ARTERY Visual Arts Collective - Viviana Astudillo, Daneila Lalo, Amelio Lalo, Troy McConnell, Javid Alibhai (Mentor Artist), Serena Nudel (Program Assistant), Robert Bailey (Project Supervisor)

Funders: Christie Ossington Neighborhood Centre, Ontario Arts Council, St. Alban's Boys and Girls Club, Landowner Cary Zweig

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Mural Description:

From now on, every time a TTC commuter exits Dupont Station at Spadina, they will be confronted with LEGAL graffiti art. In fact, the graffiti mural that stands in front of them the moment they exit the station poses the question quite blatantly – “(Is this) Art?” The design is the approach that a group of young, innovative visual artists from the Christie Ossington Neighborhood Centre and St. Alban's Boys & Girls Club are hoping will change the way people discuss graffiti as *art* and promote the beauty of the legal art form.

The mural goes on to read “Art... Is Our Life” – a statement capturing the feeling of a painting that celebrates iconic artworks of human history, from the Sphinx to Totem Poles and Tom & Jerry cartoons. The statement also represents the attitude of this young collective of artists known as **A.R.T.E.R.Y**, which stands for Artists Remain True To Empower ouR Youth.

ARTERY is a program that offers at-risk youth the opportunity to paint legal graffiti art and develop community-building and employability skills. The youth are volunteers at the LOFT Youth Program inside the Christie Ossington Neighborhood Centre (CONC), a United Way member agency. They work with their mentor artist to find ways to de-stigmatize graffiti art and discourage vandalism in the neighborhood.

The mural was created to empower and inspire young artists and allow them to use their skills to help beautify the community instead of vandalizing spaces. Community members have responded in a very positive manner to the mural production, starting with the willingness of the landowner, Cary Zweig, to collaborate with the young artists and give them freedom in creating the design.

The theme of the mural is freedom—freedom of expression through the use of graffiti as the medium, but also allowing for a mixture of various styles and personalities to be expressed. One of the goals of the mural was to show communities that graffiti art is not limited to lettering and cartoon characters, but rather to recognize that aerosol art is a technique that can unleash a mural artists’ creativity.

ARTERY will continue to create awareness about positive graffiti art in the Bloor corridor, including an upcoming youth art exhibition, thanx to the generous support of the Ontario Arts Council, CONC and St. Alban’s.