

After Tests, an Armory Is Ready to Declare, 'Artists, Start Your Engines'

From First Arts Page

terns on the plywood panels, which have been coated in seven layers of fluorescent reds, pinks, oranges and yellows and then sealed with two coats of black acrylic.

Titled "Greeting Card," after a 1944 Jackson Pollock painting that has its own tangle of spirals, the work is described as both a performance piece and an action painting. When the riders have finished, they will have created a giant fluorescent multicolored floor piece that will remain on public view through Sunday. A film of the performance will be shown on a plasma screen in the hall.

It is the first in a series of art exhibitions and performances planned for the building by a new nonprofit group, the Seventh Regiment Armory Conservancy, which in December took over management of the crenellated red-brick behemoth on Park Avenue between 66th and 67th Streets from New York State. The group still plans to hold the art and antiques fairs that have at-

tracted throngs for decades, but Rebecca Robertson, the conservancy's president and chief executive, suggested that the armory could become even more of a cultural destination.

"The armory is neither a white-box gallery nor a proscenium stage," she said. "Here you make it up. Luckily this space allows work that can't be seen anywhere else in the city."

For now, she said, the conservancy is in the research and de-

Is that a Jackson Pollock, or is it just some skid marks?

velopment phase. Still, workers have been cleaning the neglected building, and air-conditioning has been installed in the drill hall for the first time, eliminating the need for the special trucks that once piped in cool air during art and antiques fairs. The \$150,000 budget for "Greeting Card" is be-

ONLINE: 'GREETING CARD'

Images from the performance piece by Aaron Young: nytimes.com/arts

ing covered by a group of sponsors that include Tom Ford, the fashion designer, and Sotheby's.

Mr. Young, 35, a conceptual artist and sculptor, first began talking with the Art Production Fund about the piece last December at the Art Basel Miami Beach fair. "We didn't think we could do this in New York," Ms. Villareal said. "It required a large space with the audience watching the performance from above."

But as soon as she and Ms. Remen heard that the armory was seeking art projects, they met with Ms. Robertson. "Her reaction was, 'Bring it on,'" Ms. Villareal said.

Working at minimum wage, gallery assistants and students from Barnard and Columbia spent three days last week painting the panels. "It was like camp," Ms. Remen said.

Thursday evening's smoke experiment was one of many trials and rehearsals. To ensure that the smoke from the motorcycles will not endanger the audience, the glass has been removed from the 28 windows high in the rafters of the drill hall. Still, guests are warned in small letters on the bottom of the performance invitation: "A ventilation system has been installed to reduce the smoke and exhaust. Earplugs will be provided for the noise. If you are sensitive to either, please request a protected viewing space." In addition to a glassed-in room for warier viewers, the Art Production Fund will furnish the audience with face masks.

Mr. Young said that given the challenges of the synchronization and the safety concerns, nothing had been left to chance. A month ago he did tests in an empty parking lot in the Bronx near Yankee Stadium.

To inspire the riders involved in "Greeting Card," he gave each a photocopy of the Pollock painting. "The spiral motion is the template," he said. The 10 bikers — five stunt riders from Team G Unit along with five friends — will each have a designated 23-by-43-foot area on which to perform zigzags, power slides and circles. The neon lights on the bottom of each bike will allow the audience to follow the movements through the smoky haze. "I want it lit like a boxing rink, very hard-edged," Mr. Young said.

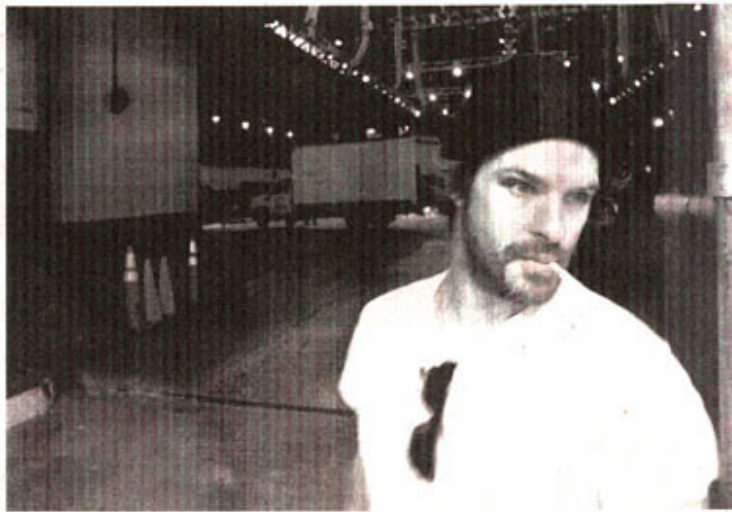
"Hopefully this will appeal to people who know nothing about motorcycles or about art," he said as he examined shreds of tire rubber embedded in some of the wood panels, a byproduct of Wink's brief motorcycle whirl.

Although Mr. Young does not ride himself, it is not his first artistic encounter with motorcycles. In 2000, as a student at the



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT STOLARIK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A test run by the stunt driver Wink 1100 gives a sense of what "Greeting Card" will look like.



Aaron Young, the artist behind "Greeting Card," which was inspired by a Pollock painting. "Hopefully this will appeal to people who know nothing about motorcycles or about art," he said.

San Francisco Art Institute, he created a piece called "High Performance," enlisting a group of cyclists he met at a local motorcycle bar called the Zeitgeist. "I got them drunk until they said yes," he recalled. The riders performed burnouts in a studio that was once used by Diego Rivera.

The result was a 3½-minute video that was eventually acquired by the Museum of Modern Art.

When it is time for the 288 panels to leave the armory, Mr. Young plans to select about 20 of them to sell through the Art Production Fund. He and the fund will split the proceeds. Before the

panels are sold, he plans to seal each one with a coat of clear resin.

"That way it will keep the hot-melted rubber fixed," he said. Even though the ride itself will last only seven minutes, he explained, the panels will be "archival."