



The **Star-Revue** takes a trip to China and tells you all about it in our new **TRAVEL SECTION PULLOUT** starting page 9



AUGUST 2011

Celebrating Columbia



Waterfront District

The **Red Hook** Star-Revue

SOUTH BROOKLYN'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

Star-Revue obtains artist rendering

Smith and 9th Goes Fancy!!!

By Elizabeth Graham



As if to add insult to injury following the failed trolley study this spring, hardy walkers to the Smith and Ninth Street subway station, the closest subway stop for most Red Hook residents, found last month the station barricaded with blue signs announcing it's closure until next March. However, if the artists rendering turns into reality, it might end up being worth the inconvenience.

A dramatic transformation is in store for the subway stop, which both north and southbound trains began bypassing in late June. Along with new tracks, plans include a new station control house and agent booth, waiting area, flooring, wall tiles and a transparent roof. "There will also be new lighting, ventilation, a public address system and signage," Deidre Parker, an MTA spokeswoman said via email.

The work is expected to be complete by next March. The closure of the Smith-9th streets station is part of phase two of the extensive Culver Viaduct reconstruction. *(please turn to page 4)*

Star-Revue Exclusive - Long Delayed Construction Project Held Up by City

Van Brunt and President - Not Fancy - STINKY!

by Elizabeth Graham

In the spring, it seemed as though a light at the end of the tunnel was starting to glimmer. Workers operating heavy construction equipment were tearing up sidewalks, digging holes, plugging them up, and scooping out a huge trench. There was even someone directing traffic around the confusing detour from Van Brunt Street onto Columbia.

There was hope, finally, that the long-delayed construction on Van Brunt would see its end, along with the disruption to the neighborhood's traffic patterns. But then, a few months after it started – nothing. Workers and equipment vanished, leaving behind a gaping trench full of standing water and no explanation for the sudden halt to a project that should have been finished years ago.

According to the Department of Design and Construction, money problems were to blame, but local officials have little patience for what they see as the city's thinly veiled apathy toward the welfare of South Brooklyn.

Craig Hammerman, District Manager of Community Board 6, pointed out that the project was budgeted for when it began in 2005, but when work didn't go as smoothly as planned, the resulting delays revealed an



Fetid water was left untended for over a month as the city stopped paying the contractor (photo by Fiala).

alarming lack of foresight by the DDC.

"This is an agency that manages construction projects all over the city, and it worries me that there was no contingency plan in place," he said. "If this were Broadway or even Atlantic Avenue, this project would have been finished years ago. There's no sense of urgency by the city to get it done... they continue to make it a low priority."

Now, there's word that the project has the green light again.

Work is set to resume the first week of August, a DDC official said. According to the contractor, activity has begun at the site, despite its dormant appearance.

"We're already mobilized," Anthony Santoro, vice president of Trocom Construction, said during the last week of July. "We don't intend to leave until we're finished, and we're going to do everything in our power to make sure that we're finished in a short period of time."

Remaining work underground includes rebuilding and connecting sewer lines, along with restructuring part of the sewer to accommodate a large water main. On the surface, repaving, new sidewalks, stop signs and traffic signals are planned. *(continued on page 3)*

Arts: Proteus Gowanus is a Treasure Trove of Gowanus Canal History

by Elizabeth Graham

Tucked around a corner and a few steps down a quiet alley, the entrance to *Proteus Gowanus* is topped by a sculpture of an arm extending out above the doorway. With its fist raised in welcome, the sculpture seems to represent the gallery's focus – creative inclusion.

The space is devoted to art, ideas, and to the history of the Gowanus Canal. Creativity, academia, ingenuity and relics from one of the city's most befouled waterways coexist inside the gallery.

Juried art shows centering around an annual theme – next up is Migration – are featured in the main room, while the Hall of the Gowanus educates visitors about the murky canal with artifacts, photos and books. There's even a water specimen from the notoriously smelly waterway, which runs just a short distance away from the gallery. Proteus Gowanus was created by artists in 2005 as a space for creativity of all kinds. In addition to work by artists from across the country, the former box factory near the corner of Nevins and Union in Gowanus includes the labor of historians, writers, scientists and mathematicians. The result is an introspective gallery, library and meeting space that allows visitors to “be able to experience art in an interdisciplinary environment,” director Tammy Pitt-



The library at Proteus Gowanus includes many books that were bound for the dump. Photos by Elizabeth Graham.

man said.

“The Gowanus area is interesting because it was for a long time a cultural no-man's land. There is space that nobody has left their stamp on. This building is full of artists, as a kind of space to let people be creative in a way of their own choosing,” Pittman said.

The annual theme that the gallery curates shows around has become “a kind of collaborative yearlong conversation open to people of all kinds. It's like we throw an idea up in the air and see what comes of it,” she said.

A number of ongoing projects at the gallery have sprung from previous years' themes. The Fixers Collective, inspired by the “Mend” theme, tries to repair broken objects that most people would discard, while the Writhing Society meets weekly to practice writing with constraints, or specific rules or limits.

Another project in residence found a home at Proteus Gowanus through Manhattan artist Madhu Kaza's conversations with Pittman about the theme of Paradise. “Here is Where We Meet” is an exploration of reading and voice, and the comfort that comes with being read to sleep. Kaza visits people's homes and reads to them at bedtime, an exercise that she admits takes a bit of getting used to for both her and her participants.

“There is the promise or potential for a

“the former box factory near the corner of Nevins and Union in Gowanus includes the labor of historians, writers, scientists and mathematicians”

lovely experience, but it requires a degree of vulnerability. I actually think that paradise is a risky proposition,” she said.

She's been invited into a number of homes in Brooklyn, but has yet to read aloud in the Gowanus area.

“I think it would be really interesting



Director Tammy Pittman calls Proteus Gowanus a space for art, books and ideas.

to make a trip to Red Hook in particular, because it's a neighborhood I'm fond of visiting, but I've never been there in the evening,” Kaza said.

For more, visit proteusgowanus.org.

BWAC Weekend Show on 'til the 21st of August.

Primal Colors Fuel Summer BWAC Show

If you've ever wondered about the big yellow banner announcing an art show at the end of Van Brunt St., across from Fairway, then it's time to explore The Brooklyn Waterfront Arts Coalition. BWAC is a collective of artists that share space and work together to create coherent and often moving art shows that highlight the talent of local artists and abroad.

The 25,000 square foot gallery is in a Civil War-era warehouse on the Red Hook waterfront. The Gallery consists of two floors with open space for performance art. BWAC is open from 1 to 6pm Saturday and Sunday.

Running now through August 21 will be “Black and White”. This show is a mix of black and white photography, infrared pieces, sculpture, mixed media, paintings, pencil drawings, and more. The amount of work that is drawn to the space is vast and each Saturday, BWAC doubles as a performance space, bringing music and theatre.

As one artist explained to me while taking a tour of the space, “This is the re-imagining of the museum of the

BLACK & WHITE



Sky Diver, by Russ Rowland is on exhibit at the current BWAC show.

people.” He believed that a museum space should be a place where people can hang out.

As such, BWAC was organized in 1978 by 16 artists, and has grown to become Brooklyn's largest artist-run organization with over 400 members. The organization works somewhat like a cooperative with artist and members working as the management, board and staff.

All events are free and open to the public. The gallery is located at 499 Van Brunt St. -James Pellegrino