

The Journal News

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

WESTCHESTER-PUTNAM
TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2017



HOMAGE TO THE PAST

Muralist creates his 2nd contribution to Yonkers street art



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YONKERS - New street art at the former Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research commemorates the building's botanical past.

The exuberantly colored, 15-foot-high by 53-foot-wide mural at the almost completed Boyce Thompson Center depicts insects and birds, a test tube, plants and a researcher peering through a microscope.

The unnamed mural was painted by Eelco van den Berg, an artist based in the Netherlands who also painted a large mural at the Mill Street courtyard in downtown Yonkers.

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MIKE SPANO
YONKERS MAYOR

Muralist Eelco van den Berg has created a mural for the Boyce Thompson Center in Yonkers. He says archival photos of workers at the center inspired him.

PHOTOS BY RICKY FLORES/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Mural

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Van den Berg said the discussions for the Boyce Thompson project started last summer when he was working on the downtown mural next to the "day-lighted" Saw Mill River. He said his mural for Boyce Thompson was inspired by archival photographs of the facility and workers there from the early 20th century.

"Based on that I just started sketching," said van den Berg, 42. "I've been playing a lot with nature, Earth, rain, water, of course plants, research on seeds and how they studied the seeds and I sort of made it one image."

The Boyce Thompson Center at 1086 N. Broadway is a mixed-use retail-medical complex whose tenants with the biggest draws will be Fortina restaurant, the WESTMED Medical Group and St. John's Riverside Hospital. The Simone Development Cos. led the \$35 million adaptive reuse of Boyce Thompson.

Tenants are expected to begin moving into the complex at the end of



RICKY FLORES/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Muralist Eelco van den Berg, who goes by the tag name I am Eelco, has created a mural for the Boyce Thompson Center in Yonkers. It commemorates the history of the center.

April and in early May, although there are no exact opening dates for some of the retail tenants.

The Boyce Thompson Institute opened in 1924 and in 1978 the institute moved to Ithaca, where it joined Cornell University. It was founded by William Boyce Thompson, a mining magnate and philanthropist who wanted to create a research center that would help promote

conservation and conquer plant diseases and pests so that the world's food production would improve.

It took van den Berg about five days to trace the mural on the building's wall and then spray paint it. On Friday, he said he would use about 60 cans of spray paint to complete the mural.

Van den Berg came to Yonkers from Chicago,

where he made a mural. After Yonkers, he is scheduled to paint a mural in the Gowanus section of Brooklyn.

"I think mural painting is a very upcoming thing," said van den Berg, an illustrator who works with companies and advertisers to create street-art-style projects. "There's more awareness of mural painting, so I'm not surprised that (Yonkers) sort of discovered this, what's going on in Bushwick for instance, and tries to put murals up here in Yonkers."

Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano visited van den



RICKY FLORES/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Muralist Eelco van den Berg has created a mural for the Boyce Thompson Center that commemorates its history and the role it played in scientific research.



Berg on Friday to get an advance look at the project.

"He does wonderful work. I think it adds to the whole vibe that we're trying to attract with the millennials...a place where there's freedom of expression," said Spano, who

was very enthusiastic about the adaptive reuse of the Boyce Thompson building. "It looks fantastic. I think the people of Yonkers are going to be very proud of what they accomplished here."

Twitter: @ErnieJourno

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