



Maybe there should be new reality TV show called “Extreme Scaffolding Makeover.” While the urbanSHED competition helped focus attention on the problem of NYC’s drab and uninspired sidewalk-shed design, it’s hardly the only effort to make construction sites more visually appealing to passersby. Ever-more public art is popping up along construction sites, thanks to the Downtown Alliance’s Re:Construction program; the NYC Department of Buildings’ urbancanvas; and ArtBridge, an organization devoted to displaying emerging artists’ work on scaffolding, noted its director, Jordana Zeldin.

Artist Rodney Durso decided to found ArtBridge while living in a building covered in long-term scaffolding, London Terrace Gardens in Chelsea. He didn’t see the sidewalk shed as an eyesore — he saw its potential as a giant “blank canvas,” he said. He found an ally in Joe Covello of United Hoisting and Scaffolding, who lent his technical advice and support.

Durso has found that building owners and property management companies don’t always welcome the idea of allowing art on scaffolding, but he thinks that will change once they start to understand its potential as a public-relations boon. Exhibiting public art on a construction site is a way that “a building owner can bring attention in a positive way,” he said.

For local artist Maya Barkai, adorning a construction fence at 99 Church Street was a chance to explore a new type of work, different from what she might make for a gallery show. As part of Re:Construction, she created a 500-foot-long installation called Walking Men 99, which covers the fence with 99 icons of “walk” lights from around the world, displayed at a human scale. The fence proved a perfect venue for the piece, offering the right scale and location on a city street, the icons’ natural habitat. “I could not put it on a gallery wall,” she remarked. “It needed that construction site.”

Lisa Delgado is a freelance journalist who has written for OCULUS, The Architect’s Newspaper, Architectural Record, Blueprint, and Wired, among other publications.

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## Reports from the Field

### New Sightings On Site

By Lisa Delgado

**Event:** Plywood, Concrete, Paint! Re-imagining the Contemporary Construction Site as Canvas for Public Art

**Location:** Center for Architecture, 11.18.10

**Speakers:** Joe Covello — Vice President and Co-owner, United Hoisting and Scaffolding; Rodney Durso — Founder, ArtBridge; Olympia Kazi — Executive Director, Van Alen Institute; Maya Barkai — Public Artist

**Moderator:** Katie Denny — Executive Director, North Brooklyn Public Art Coalition

**Introduction:** Jordana Zeldin — Director, ArtBridge

**Organizers:** ArtBridge; Center for Architecture

