



th, 15, sprawls across the paper-lined hall while painting a panel containing the Sears tower.

CARL JUSTE/HERALD STAFF

CLASS ACT

New World School of the Arts students salute Miami's skyline with a mural on the site of a felled bank

BY ELIZABETH HANLY

Special to the Herald

Art student Michelle Jean, age 16, is known as the secret weapon.

"Yeah, that's what they call me," she says softly, not quite sure whether she should be embarrassed.

Michelle is a high school student at New World School of the Arts — one with an extraordinary sense of color, according to teacher Tara Breslin. And it's Michelle's ability to add intricate tones quickly that is helping advance New World's latest visual-arts projects.

Michelle is one of 19 New World students — mostly high school sophomores and juniors — who have gathered every morning for six weeks to work on a 190-foot mural that will transform an ugly construction fence around the Espirito Santo complex on Brickell Avenue in Miami.

Bill Ross, president of Estoril, a company that develops Espirito Santo projects, wanted the fence to become something beautiful. So he went to New World.

Again.

In fact, this is the third time Ross and Espirito Santo

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Students' Miami mural will beautify construction site

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have collaborated with New World students.

"And each time," Ross says, "we are amazed by the kids."

In January 2000, there was the unique *Departing Perspectives*. The Espirito Santo bank was to be demolished, so Ross and Coral Gables' gallery owner Fredric Snitzer invited New World students and a group of South Florida's most prominent artists to mark the event by using the empty building to create whatever they chose.

Art in America, one of the nation's most prestigious art journals, covered the event by focusing not only on the established artists, but on the work of the New World students as well.

A year later Ross, Snitzer, New World students and senior Miami artists came together again for a Cristo-like wrap-around project. Large panels encircled the space where the bank once stood. Afterward, a silent auction of that work netted \$19,000 — all of which was given to New World.

But while both shows were visually exciting, they came and went quickly. Not so Ross' latest New World collaboration, which will be installed around Labor Day and remain on display for two years — the time it will take for the Espirito Santo complex to be completed.

Ross came up with the idea for the third project shortly after finding himself staring down a construction fence, thinking of what the finished Espirito Santo complex — a 36-story building made largely of glass and designed by the respected New York firm K.P.F. — could mean to Miami.

If it were to become another landmark, as Ross hoped, then it seemed fitting to begin calling attention to the building



PHOTOS BY CARL JUSTE/HERALD STAFF

Teacher Tara Breslin checks the work of D.J. William, 17, who is portraying old Miami with a horse and carriage.

during construction. Ross imagined a mural that would include all the significant landmarks of Miami, especially the edifices that dominate the city's skyline.

So he gathered photographs and brought them to Louise Romeo, director of the visual arts program at New World. She in turn talked with her students.

"They work plenty hard during the school year," she says. "I was concerned that they might be burned out. Maybe this project and its six-week deadline would be too

much for them.

"But I should have known better."

TEAM WORK

Tatiana Sainz, a 19-year-old college student at New World, was next to come forward, scanning the photos into a computer and making a series of manipulations.

While Sainz worked, the high school students were split in teams. As Breslin says, that alone was complicated.

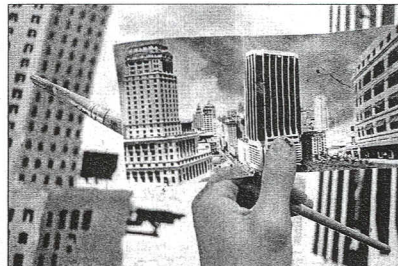
"This wasn't about hanging out with a friend, it was about the kids having worked

together long and hard on other projects, it was about them knowing each other — their strengths and weaknesses — and dividing themselves in the way that would best serve the project."

When presented with Sainz's efforts, the students added their own configurations.

"At first it was all an incredible puzzle, a great big cut and paste," says Jules Joseph, 16. "Throw a building here, throw one there."

By the end of the first week of the project there was one



Students use photographs to help portray the story of Miami painted panels.

long computer-generated photographic scroll. Images of the Venetian pool suggested not Miami, but far older, colonial sites (Havana?) next to soft fields and soft forms.

Then wham! The Grand Bay Hotel in Key Biscayne.

The Biltmore is part of the mix, as is the Freedom Tower and the old Sears building on Biscayne Boulevard.

There are old trolley tracks, carriages and department stores from the 1920s filled with fashionable shoppers. There are palm trees, water and the ever-changing light of Miami.

And finally, at the end of the sequence, the glass and lines of the forthcoming Espirito Santo building.

By the second week, several of New World's adjoining corridors had become a studio. (The school, at 25 NE Second St. in downtown Miami, has never had a bounty of space.) Strips of protective brown paper had been laid along the floor. Boom boxes had been brought in and the teams of varied students were transcribing and transforming the photographic images into panels four feet by eight feet.

No one panel belonged to any one student, but instead, everything became a team effort.

"You know," says Ru Solano, 15, "I think the vases look even better v our different styles that could have looked if any us had tried it alone."

Shadows and silhouetted darks and lights, miracu interchange on the sam vas. Images shift, as ever seems to do in this city

"I never knew Miami be so beautiful," says I Travers, 16.

Adds 15-year-old K Jarbath: "This older Mia place I would have ill have known — it's simp elegant."

The future, however proved less embracing last photographs of the line drawings of the rito Santo complex, w exacting that several shied away from them.

Not 16-year-old Cha vioso.

"My work is usually more wired than this," h fesses. "In a way, I'm le: to relax as I work on thi ject."

"They all are," says R "As they pull together an on a project of this comp these young people are c to know themselves mo more as the artists the That process is stunni watch."