

Pedestrians watch artists work in NYC storefront



By ULA ILNYTZKY Jul. 10, 2014 3:07 AM EDT

NEW YORK (AP) — Two painters are temporarily working out of an empty storefront at the landmark Brill Building, allowing thousands of passing pedestrians to watch them create scenes of Times Square.

Andy Hammerstein and Tom Christopher are painting each weekday until July 17. The artists, who are known for their New York cityscapes, have been working on the pop installation six hours a day since June 17.

The Brill Building at 49th Street and Broadway is famous for the generations of songwriters, including Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington and Carole King, who peddled their wares to music publishers there. The owner offered the vacant space to the artists free of charge.



"We're de-mystifying the process to over 5,000 people per hour who pass by ... more viewers than any gallery or museum," Christopher said.

Most of the canvasses, some measuring 4 feet by 5 feet, will be completed back at the artists' studios. For now, the artists are "getting the patterns and the energy and the electricity of the area into the work," said Christopher, who has already produced eight canvasses.

"It's an amazing place to work," he added. "There's so much going — jack hammers and lights and people yelling. It's absolutely an insane place."



Hammerstein said street musicians, artists and vendors sometimes congregate in front of the window because of the crowds watching them.

"It become its own little power spot. People stop and stay and we become only a part of what is going on," he said.

"I'm amazingly inspired by the energy," Hammerstein added.

Marianne Orbeson, of Denmark, said she stopped by "because it was fun to watch an artist at work."

"The pictures he's painting is the way we see the streets of New York," Orbeson said. "It's wonderful."

Passerby Steven Chou, of Taiwan, described the work as performance but wanted to see more action.

"I thought the idea of painting, working inside of a storefront, letting everyone see what's going on is more interesting than his work itself," said the recent graduate from Columbia University.

Associated Press photographer Kathy Willens contributed to this report.