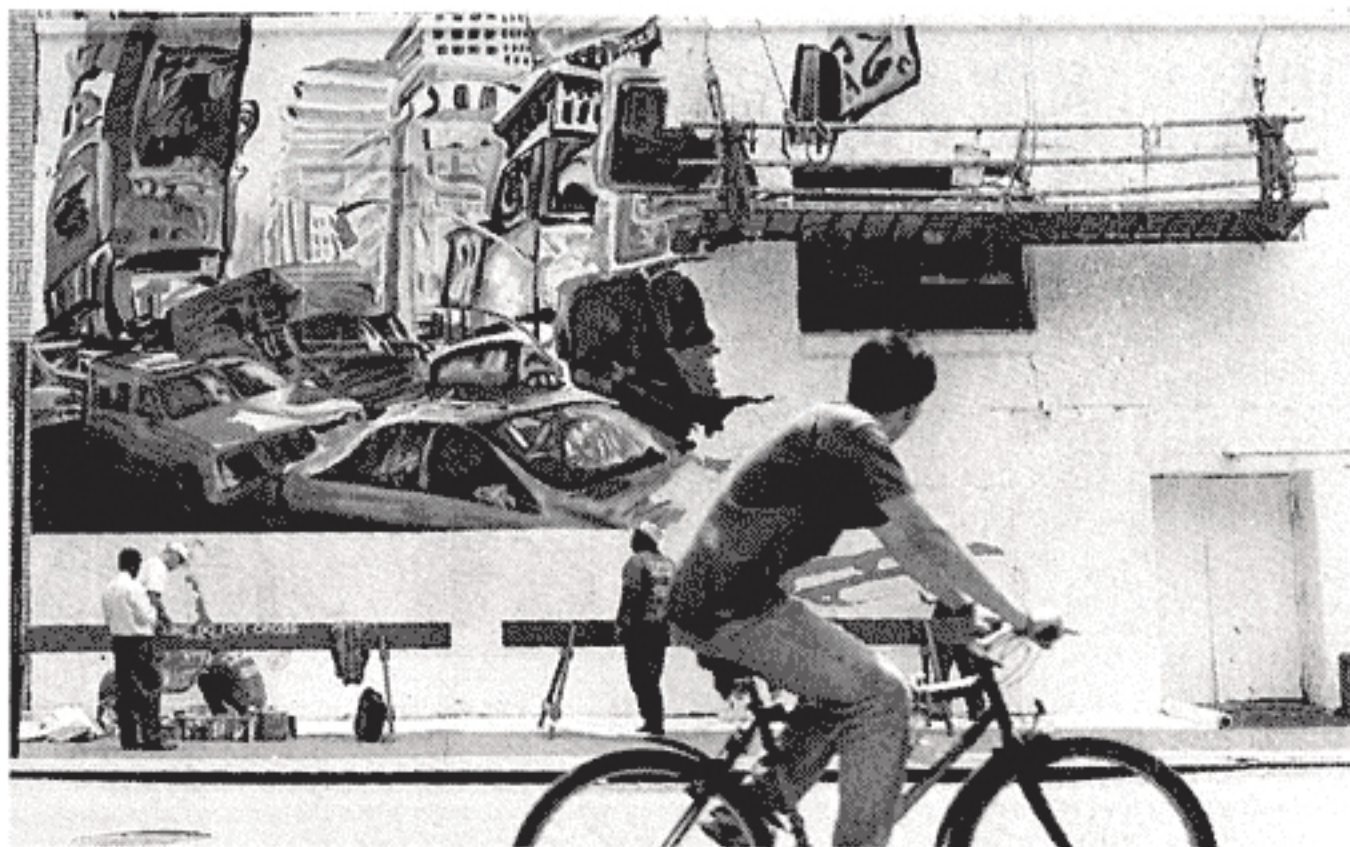


Photographs by James Estrin/The New York Times

Tom Christopher, above right, worked with two students on a mural that began taking shape, photo right, on West 53d Street yesterday.



## Great White Way Tries Novel Approach to Street Art: Just Paint

By THOMAS J. LUECK

Amid the electronic razzle-dazzle of Times Square, with as much neon per square inch as any place in the Western Hemisphere, it seems almost quaint: artists using brushes, stencils and pails of bright paint on the north wall of the **Roseland Ballroom**. High tech it is not, but noticed it will be.

It is the largest example of hand-painted street art in New York City, a mural measuring 225 feet by 23 feet and extending along most of the south side of 53d Street, from Broadway to Eighth Avenue. Perhaps more to the point, it is a graffiti artist's dream.

"This is the heart of New York, a place to get recognized," said Dubany Rivera, 19, one of five aspiring teen-age artists who were selected to work on the mural. He brings experience with several graffiti creations in Manhattan's East Village that were accompanied by run-ins with police officers.

"Everything else around here has been done electronically, digitally and in glaring light," said Tom Christopher, whose artwork can be viewed on the walls inside Rockefeller Center and galleries in Manhattan and Beverly Hills and who is coordinating this project. "Our process is hundreds of years old, a first for Times Square."

Work on the mural began in earnest yesterday and will be completed in four weeks. Sponsored by the Times Square Business Improvement District, which is to pay \$70,000 to Mr. Christopher, his young protégés and assorted sign painters who will participate, the gigantic piece of art is one of the most offbeat attempts to clean up what remains of the crumbling blight that not long ago dominated the Great White Way.

Roseland was once a magnet for Times Square night life when orchestras led by Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller played for thousands on its vast dance floor. Now, it is

used for rock concerts, private parties and ballroom dancers.

The mural, covering the back wall of Roseland (its entrance is on 52d Street), is in a logistically important spot across 53d Street from the stage entrance to the **Ed Sullivan Theater**, home of "Late Night With David Letterman." The show's cameras frequently use that entrance for on-air gags.

The mural is to be composed mainly of work by Mr. Christopher, 45. He has created nine panels, each more than 35 feet wide, depicting pedestrians, bicyclists and other Times Square scenes that will be stenciled onto the wall, then painted by sign painters.

Mr. Christopher, who receives \$20,000 for his work, said the artists will use a process called pouncing, similar to that used by artists extending back to the Italian Renaissance, in which paper stencils and chalk are used to transfer the outlines of images.

The lower six feet of the mural, running its

entire length, has been reserved for the teenagers, all students at the High School of Graphic Arts on West 49th Street. The five have selected images of Times Square to paint, including theater tickets, dancing shoes, and, in Mr. Rivera's case, two saxophones against a backdrop of sheet music for the song "New York, New York."

The painting is the third and largest in a public school program called Peace 2000, in which artistically promising pupils from poor neighborhoods paint murals. The students will each receive \$6 an hour and a \$100 commission.

For Roseland, the project offers hope that an unremarkable back wall will attract public attention, even in the glare of Times Square. "It is not as though these kids are spray-painting anything they want on our building," Lisa Pinney, director of special events for Roseland, said. "It is serious art. And it is sure not going to be dull."