

“Tides and Times” bring the 2021 New Bedford Seaport Art Walk to life

In 2013, artist Jessica Bregoli founded New Bedford’s annual Seaport Art Walk. It’s become a signature cultural event since then, combining the rich history of the Port of New Bedford and equally deep legacy of artistic expression in this city.

Each year several artists are selected by a review committee to explore a theme through outdoor installations such as murals or sculpture along the working waterfront. By the docks of America’s highest value fishing port, profound social values come together and help define this authentic seaport city and its Seaport Cultural District.

It’s fitting then that “Tides and Time” is the theme of this year’s Seaport Art Walk, which officially opened on Thursday, July 8 during AHA! New Bedford with a public tour featuring the curator and artists. The selected artists chosen to create work in 2021 have internalized the meaning of the last pandemic year, while also looking more broadly at the society we live in today. Its sculptures and murals were created to reflect or comment on our ever-changing climate, whether that be the ocean, environment, economy, politics, or social justice.



Kyle Couture and Marcus Cusick present their new mural _The Heirs to the Land_ for the 2021 Seaport Art Walk. (Seaport Art Walk photo)

Artist Jake Ginga, for example, was just 19 years old when he got a job working for a small oyster farm run by a family who had been shellfishermen for over four generations. They taught him everything – about family, hard work, and aquaculture – at an age and time he needed it most, he believes.

January of 2021 claimed the lives of two of them, the father and grandfather who were both irreplaceable father figures. His very first artwork displayed in New Bedford galleries were portraits of them. In an attempt to process his grief, he has created portraits of them again for “Tides and Time” entitled “The Bell Brothers.”

Meanwhile, artist Marcus Cusick and Kyle Couture of Open Eye Movement, working with Chief George Spring Buffalo and Chief Daryl Black Eagle of the Pocasset, offers “Tides and Time” a mural called “The Heirs of the Land,” which brings to light the true histories that surround the Pokanoket nation.

He explains in an artist’s statement, “The Algonquian language was nearly lost to oppression of a people and their culture,

and is kept alive today by the descendants of a nation who first greeted the pilgrims, the Pocasset Wampanoag tribe of the Pokanoket nation.



*Jake Ginga with his _The Bell Brothers_ mural tribute.
(Seaport Art Walk photo)*

"The mural aims to depict portraits of local Native American chiefs and their descendents showing how, over time, the nation was resilient and able to survive. The backdrop includes a landscape composition of layered text of Algonquian words and titles."

Alanna Boucher designed a sculpture called "Hashtag Change" with New Bedford High School students and art teachers. In her artist statement, she says: "Change is a constant evolution of remembering old ways and supporting the new; whether it is about taking care of the planet, ourselves, or helping others, change is growth. Time is not going to stop or slow down so we must keep pushing everyday to better this world and work towards changing the future for generations to come."

For the 2021 Seaport Art Walk, her large wood hashtag symbol was built with the help of her husband, engineer Chris

Boucher, and is covered with word planks naming important topics designed by the teenage students and art teachers. She encourages everyone to share what they want to bring awareness to on social media – and remember to hashtag key words from this sculpture.

Meanwhile, Eric Lintala's fiberglass and metal sculpture titled "Enough is Enough" represents the many injustices that still plague our country and the world.

He says, "We make speeches, we march for human rights, social injustice, environmental issues, etc. and still the never ending fight goes on. My sculpture symbolically represents all people and all concerns and hardships we bring to ourselves and to this planet and visually gestures ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!"



Erin Meade looks upon her mural _CAPping the wave_ made with over 6,000 recycled bottle caps. (Seaport Art Walk photo)

And finally, Erin Meade, an art teacher at Keith Middle School in New Bedford, says she has always loved the simplicity of window installations. She put her passion for display and

creativity to good use working in New York City with industry favorites such as Macy's and SAKS Fifth Avenue, as well as small boutiques."

So, for "Tides and Time," she has designed a 30-foot installation which incorporates all different types and sizes of plastic bottle caps to create movement and playfulness through a wave and whale form. This is a recycling project that the students of Keith Middle School have contributed to, as well as an opportunity to show the community that even trash can be turned into beauty.

This year's 2021 exhibition "Tides and Time," is presented by New Bedford Creative, in partnership with DATMA's WATER 2021, New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, and New Bedford Parks, Recreation and Beaches. It is funded in part by New Bedford Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency, as well as the city of New Bedford's Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund, and Bristol County Savings Bank. Further details can be found at newbedfordcreative.org/seaport-art-walk.