

From Trash To Treasure: Broken Glass From Fort Greene Park Is Being Transformed Into A Community Mosaic

BY HEATHER CHIN ON JANUARY 4, 2016 ART & MUSIC, GREEN, NEIGHBORS



With help from residents, local artist Amanda Patenaude is crafting a community mosaic of broken glass salvaged from Fort Greene Park. (Photo by Heather Chin/Fort Greene Focus)



Emily Radke, 9, and her painted piece of broken glass that will be part of the Fort Greene Park mosaic. (Photo by Heather Chin/Fort Greene Focus)



Glass is one of those materials that is endlessly changeable, able to be both beautiful and deadly, a masterpiece or mundane or trash. With enough heat, it is easily recyclable, as well, and that is why for the past year, Fort Greene artist Amanda Patenaude has been collaborating with Fort Greene Park and the Fort Greene Park Conservancy (FGPC) to transform nearly 100 pounds (and counting!) of broken glass collected by park workers and clean-up volunteers, dating from the 1930s to the present day, into something useful for the entire community.

A community mosaic map of the park, which each piece of clear and brown, green and blue, purple and white glass featuring a small painting of whatever each resident painter most values about our park and about green space and urban ecology in general. Thus far, there are birds, leaves, flowers, trees, dogs, soccer and tennis balls, and more.

"It's a communal, interactive activity and it's so exciting to hear the ways in which we can take the problem [of broken glass littering the park] and find a solution that people in the park can enjoy," explained Patenaude. "Glass is something people associate with everyday, utilitarian uses. But the concept of manipulating it with heat and fire, is fascinating."



The glass itself has been accumulating over decades, if not centuries, explained Charles Jarden of the FGPC. "Starting from 1776, [the park and lawn] was a focus of the community as a green space, with gardens and buildings, [so] some of the glass could be quite old."

By making these literal fragments of Fort Greene history into something new, Patenaude and our community of residents and visitors will be able to express part of what makes Fort Greene so special.

"This map can capture that one guy who brings parrots to the park regularly, and how the Conservancy is keeping the Visitors Center open, and how we can bring our dogs, go people-watching, have a blanket picnic, or fly kites," she explained. "Parks are so important to revitalize the city with green grass, leaves, serenity, and a place to communicate with other people but in a quiet and ecological way."

Emily and Alexander Radke, 9 and 13, say their favorite thing about parks is birds.

"They're really elegant," they said, showing off their painted mallard and bluejay. "I also like nature, freedom, and humanity's lust for want."

Ninety-five-year-old Trina Kruger agrees. A Fort Greene resident and artist of many years, she painted the word "LOVE" on a piece of green glass for the mosaic map.

"She created something that will last," said Kruger's grandson Scott Reiburn. "Art was her way of communicating. She's always been shy, so she spoke through art — paintings, watercolors, mosaics, collages." In addition to the mosaic, Patenaude has melted down some of the glass to create ornaments, such as the one on the Fort Greene Park holiday tree, as donor gifts.

"We started melting it down and blowing the glass into other shapes," said Patenaude, who works out of a studio in UrbanGlass. "We started the collaboration in April, and the artistry took place in the fall."

There will be more free community workshops where you can add your own glass piece for the mosaic, TBD. We'll update with them when we find out the details.

Until then, this Saturday-Sunday, January 9-10, if you want to learn how to enamel, drill, melt and shape glass of your own, you can take this class at UrbanGlass, led by Patenaude and Dorie Guthrie.