

[First Friday Art Walk, June 1, 2007](#)

Dan Wilcox

These "art walks" in so many communities, Kingston, Albany, Troy, Schenectady, are wonderful ways to get people out of their cars & onto the streets. Who goes for the art ("Art")? I'm usually there to see who shows up, grab some (almost) free food & wine. Oh yeah, & wander past the stuff until something/someone grabs me. Now with the weather better there is way too much to see at once. Besides, I ain't no art critic, not like my friend Tim. I hit the usual around Lark St., but didn't make it to Center Galleries (I'll check it out during the week when there are no crowds).

I ran into the aforementioned Tim & got him to tear himself away from Ambrose + Sable ("Changing Spaces") & we rolled down the hill together to St. Anthony's Church on Madison & Grand. The Grand Street Community Arts is trying to renovate the building for community/arts use & stuffed their flyer in the exhibit broadside. In addition, **Michael Oatman's** blurb for the show, "Vestuary Operatics", also pitched the idea. I'll get back to that at the end.

Overall it was a wonderful event, with 19 artists represented, spread out through the decayed & propped up remains of the church. There was much thoughtful use of the uniqueness of the space, with other pieces just sort of tacked on or included just because the space was big enough, like **Abraham Ferraro's** "Stationary Climber."

The pieces ran from the decorative (the striking wall drawings), to the obsessively intricate (**Chris Harvey's** plastic found objects altar piece), to the whimsical (tea bags on the columns' astragals), to the complexly interactive (**Sarah Gonek's** "Lady of the Brambles"), to the merely self-indulgent (**Ryder Cooley** suspended in space yet again, in what I can only classify as "smack art"), to the touchingly accidental (**Teddy Adams** asleep in a folding chair). But the greatest of the "Art" was just the many people from the community, artists & plain (& not so plain) citizens wandering about, talking, meeting friends, sipping wine, chasing their kids.

Now about the effort to "save the building". I was drawn in particular to the next to the line from the Grand St. Community Arts flyer: "We continue to investigate heating options and energy costs." And to the opening that stated "St. Anthony's Church was built in 1907". I'm not so sure what is of such grave historical value here. One hundred years old is a veritable babe-in-the woods in most other parts of the world, even in this country & City. It makes me wonder what "loss" there was to the community when whatever was torn down to build St. Anthony's -- now that would be even older, right? I'm sure it's not just the heating & energy costs that will be outrageous; what about plumbing? Wiring? Perhaps the funds would be better spent to create a new, 21st Century building that could more cheaply & efficiently provide for community space, one that could be designed around the needs of the community. I agree with Michael Oatman's statement, although not in the context he intended: "To herald change." Real change would be to make history, not preserve what is worn out & done for.

