Grand Scale Mural Project

Ryan Singh

Context/History

- Located at 160 East 125th street between Lexington Avenue and Third Avenue

- The lot used to be filled with stores such as Pathmark and Rainbow

- The stores closed in November 2015 and were sold to Extell Development for $39 million

- Extell demolished the structures and there have been several projects proposed for this site but never went through

- The lot has been repurchased and is now part of the MTA's Second Avenue Subway extension which is expected to start in 2030 and finish in 2039

Present Day

- The lot sat vacant for more than a decade

- Since 2019, the Grand Scale Mural Project has worked individually to turn "eyesores into artwork"

- Dozens of artists annually paint murals on the wooden walls of the lot to beautify the neighborhood and express themselves

- With the MTA's project approaching, the artwork on the wooden walls are at risk

<u>Why?</u>

- Steps away from how we typically think of preservation architecture

- Focuses on art on temporary structures rather than architectural landmarks

- Murals give voice to communities allowing them to express, communicate and celebrate current events as well as historical

- The murals aren't static, they have been evolving with the community for years

- The site is at risk so it creates an interesting situation on how to preserve the art and the culture that it represents

Radical Preservation Themes

- <u>Blackness/Otherness:</u> The murals celebrate Harlem's Black community, its culture, history, and creative expression. Preserving these murals protects community voices that are often overlooked in urban planning and development.

- <u>Erasure, Futurity, and Fabulation:</u> The murals are temporary and vulnerable. Without preservation, they could easily be erased by construction.

- <u>Preservation vs. "Heritage":</u> The Grand Scale murals aren't historic buildings, yet they hold cultural, social, and historical significance for Harlem.

- <u>Tangible vs. Intangible History:</u> The painted murals are tangible, but the stories, identity, and memory they embody are intangible.