

# paper

PAPERVIEW  
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## THE DREAM TEAM

GRAFFITI WRITERS AREN'T EXACTLY KNOWN AS HISTORIC PRESERVATIONISTS. BUT ARTIST STEVE POWERS, MORE commonly known as ESPO (that stands for Exterior Surface Painting Operation), isn't taking the usual wall-writing approach in his new undertaking. In an unprecedented public-art project called "The Dreamland Artist Club," Powers and 19 amazing artists (including Ryan McGinness, dearraindrop, Ashley Macomber, Jack Pierson, Toland Grinnell and Jules de Balincourt) are rejuvenating signage around Coney Island's theme parks. The goal is to retain the community's traditional aesthetic.

"One of the cool things about Coney Island is how intact it's remained despite the gentrification in other parts of Brooklyn," Powers says. "I hope we won't mess it up too much." Last summer he started volunteering to create signs for some of the Coney Island merchants. When he approached the nonprofit arts group Creative Time for support, they latched onto it. In addition to the signs, Powers repainted the bumpercar bunker and all the cars on the Cyclone roller coaster; the collective dearraindrop decorated a ride called "The Spider" in their trademark exuberant iconography; and McGinness covered the Wally arcade with a 135-foot run of loons and orange and green panels. With a new baseball stadium, a new subway station and various hipster-friendly festivals, this once-thriving, then-abandoned, perennially world-famous boardwalk is in the middle of one of the strongest revivals in its history. But Powers is sticking to his vision of Coney Island conservation. "We want to add to the signs that are there, not replace the beautiful old ones," he says. "To a lot of merchants, I say, 'I'd be happy to paint your sign, but let's give the old one another four years.' There's a handcrafted look in the faded stuff. A lot of business owners want everything new and shiny, but there's a lot to be said for keeping the old signs." Creative Time presents "The Dreamland Artist Club" at Coney Island, Brooklyn. Opening June 12. Visit [www.creativetime.org](http://www.creativetime.org) for details. ★ KATE JACOBS • PHOTOGRAPH BY LULA RAE