



# Brooklyn Daily Eagle

**Donate Your Car!**  
**Help a Sick Child!**  
[www.songsoflove.org](http://www.songsoflove.org)  
 As Seen On:  
**60 Minutes!**



You are not logged in. [Register now.](#)

August 14, 2008

Daily Cover



Weekly Cover



## Features

### Gowanus Sheds its Tough Skin for a Weekend Of Open Art Studios, Exhibits and Conversation

by Brooklyn Eagle (), published online 10-19-2007

#### Local Artists Aren't Aghast, But They Do Sponsor AGAST

By Lauren Hansen

Special to the Brooklyn Daily Eagle  
 GOWANUS — Between the “power-hoods” of Carroll Gardens and Park Slope comes the rumbling of industrious and artistic activity — the sounds of Gowanus.

In this nascent Brooklyn neighborhood, factory buildings take the place of brownstone walk-ups, and graffitied brick facades cloak a world of creation. Despite the tumultuous history of the eponymous canal around which it is built, during the last decade, the Gowanus neighborhood has become a hotbed for working artists who put themselves on display during the Annual Gowanus Artist Studio Tour (AGAST).

This Saturday and Sunday mark the 11th anniversary of the annual tour, where 140 artists, located in a 14-by-4-block radius, open up their studios to fellow artists, neighborhoodies and newcomers alike. Because of the steady increase in participants, organizers of the tour have made some adjustments over the years.

“We are trying to make it more user-friendly,” says Joshua Marks, an artist, studio manager and AGAST leader. “There is a learning curve.” New additions and newly tweaked old standbys include banners that hang on the exteriors of the 28 sites, hand-distributed fliers, downloadable maps and extensive raffle prizes.

Joshua Marks and his wife, singer Joanna Mayfield, took over the tour reins three years ago. Marks and Mayfield, along with several artists, spouses, partners and neighborhood volunteers, band together to organize, update, market and run the annual tour and year-round Web site. It is no small task.

“The tour creates an audience, some of whom are very loyal and others of whom aren’t used to looking at art, which is a wonderful opportunity on both sides,” says Linda Tharp, a three-time AGAST participant and organizer. “AGAST is partly the tour but it’s also the Web site that we update and that helps us maintain those connections year-round.”

These connections have helped the tour grow in both sophistication and attendance. Just this year, after a decade of community outreach and involvement, AGAST became a 501 C 3 organization, which means it is approved for tax exemption.

“The tour itself is an educational tool because we are opening up a dialogue to the community,” notes Annie Leist, an AGAST participant and volunteer. “Attendees, many of whom bring their children, get the opportunity to meet working artists and learn what it’s like to work in the profession. This tour is a unique opportunity that you wouldn’t have in any other city, to learn about art, to learn about the creative process.”

#### Former Fabric Plant Serves as Tour’s Hub

The federal recognition and the consistent growth of AGAST is due, in part, to an entrepreneurial venture undertaken by Marks and Mayfield. Around the same time that they took over leadership of the tour, the duo bought and renovated the fourth floor of 94 Ninth St., a one-time fabric plant that sits below the Ninth Street trestle





Artist Annie Leist stands in her studio at 94 Ninth St. in Gowanus. Leist is among the 140 artists who are opening their studios this weekend for AGAST — the Annual Gowanus Artist Studio Tour.  
 Photo by Lauren Hansen

Archives  
 Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online (1841-1902)

Archives  
 Brooklyn Eagle (2003-present)

Sign In

ID is your email

Password

For registration questions [click here](#)

- Categories
- Main page
  - Atlantic Yards
  - Photo Galleries
  - Brooklyn Today
  - Brooklyn People
  - Brooklyn Cyclones
  - Courthouse News & Cases
  - Brooklyn SPACE
  - Real Estate Listings
  - Features
  - Crime
  - Sports
  - Street Beat
  - Brooklyn Inc
  - Brooklyn KIDS
  - Editorial viewpoint
  - Brooklyn Woman
  - Art
  - Up & Coming
  - Hills & Gardens
  - Auction Advertiser
  - On Food
  - Health Care
  - Get A LifeStyle
  - On This Day in History
  - Obituaries
  - Community Boards
  - Stars and stripes
  - Community News

Contact Us

If you'd like to contact us [click here](#)

For registration

bridge.

Taking advantage of the cavernous space, Marks and Mayfield gutted the floor and built 51 studios, which are now home to over 70 artists, with a waiting list 40 deep. "The studios were all rented within three months," says Marks, "and most rented incomplete — just drawings and plans were shown." The boom of the couple's investment has reverberated through the tour. This year, 40 artists from 94 Ninth St. are participating in AGAST, more than any other location, making the burgeoning site the unofficial center of the tour.

With AGAST opening on the heels of DUMBO's Art Under the Bridge Festival, it seems as though neighborhood art festivals are becoming as common as our corner bodegas. "Brooklyn is such a unique place for an artist because there are so many of us," says Leist. "The tours allow artists see what is going on in our surrounding communities," she adds.

This working environment is a key element to AGAST and a genuine indicator of the neighborhood in which it lives. The Gowanus may not look like your quintessential Brooklyn neighborhood, but this is a place where artists come to create.

"I like to have an industrial zone," says Tharp, from her spacious 94 Ninth St. studio. On a pleasant fall day, with the windows pushed open you can hear the murmur of the cement plants along the canal; just beyond the "Kentile Floor" sign you can see insect-like machine arms moving scrap metal in a vacant lot. This cacophony of construction is not just a coincidental backdrop for Tharp's luminous abstract paintings, but actually her inspiration. She says, "I like the sound of something doing and making something real."

*The 11th Annual Gowanus Artist Studio Tour opens this weekend from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. For downloadable maps, directions and more information please go to [www.agastbrooklyn.com](http://www.agastbrooklyn.com).*

© **Brooklyn Daily Eagle 2007**

*All materials posted on [BrooklynEagle.com](http://BrooklynEagle.com) are protected by United States copyright law.*

*Just a reminder, though -- It's not considered polite to paste **the entire story** on your blog. Most blogs post a summary or the first paragraph, ( 40 words) then post a link to the rest of the story. That helps increase click-throughs for everyone, and minimizes copyright issues. So please keep posting, but not the entire article. arturc at att.net*