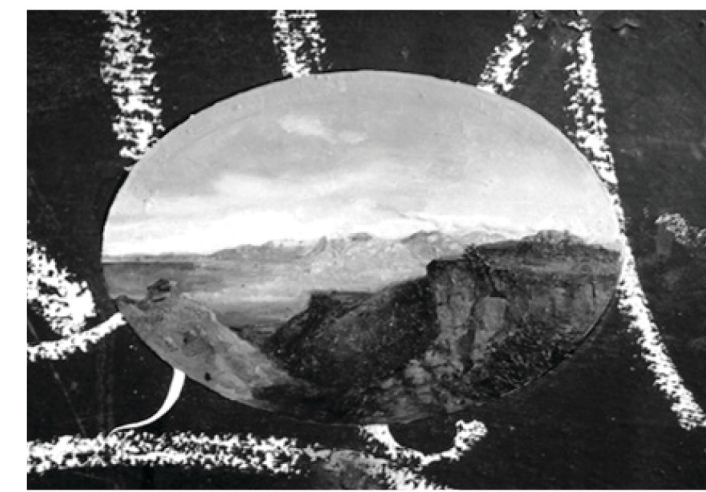


New York Beautification Project, Ellen Harvey, 1999–2001.
Close-up and distance views of 6 of 40 paintings in oil on
graffiti sites in New York City, each painting approx. 5" x 7".
Photography: Ellen Harvey Studio.



THE NEW YORK BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT ELLEN HARVEY

On a concrete pylon in Washington Heights, Ellen Harvey unwittingly began her New York Beautification Project. In June of 1999, in the midst of Mayor Giuliani's crackdown on graffiti artists, Harvey had been invited to participate in an art event that was part of the cleanup and renovation of Highbridge Park. Harvey decided to paint all the lampposts gold, and when she finished early she found herself painting some graffiti. Alongside spray-painted tags, she created a postcard-sized classical landscape, and found herself asking questions about who is allowed to make art in public and what kinds of graffiti are "acceptable".

During the next two years, Harvey dotted New York City with forty of these gems of tranquillity—coastlines, mountains, rivers, trees, and country estates. The paintings appeared on dumpsters, tucked into unpainted sections of murals, corners of tagged-up buildings, abandoned cars, even a tugboat. Harvey's anonymous act of beauty joined the city's graffitied landscape.

