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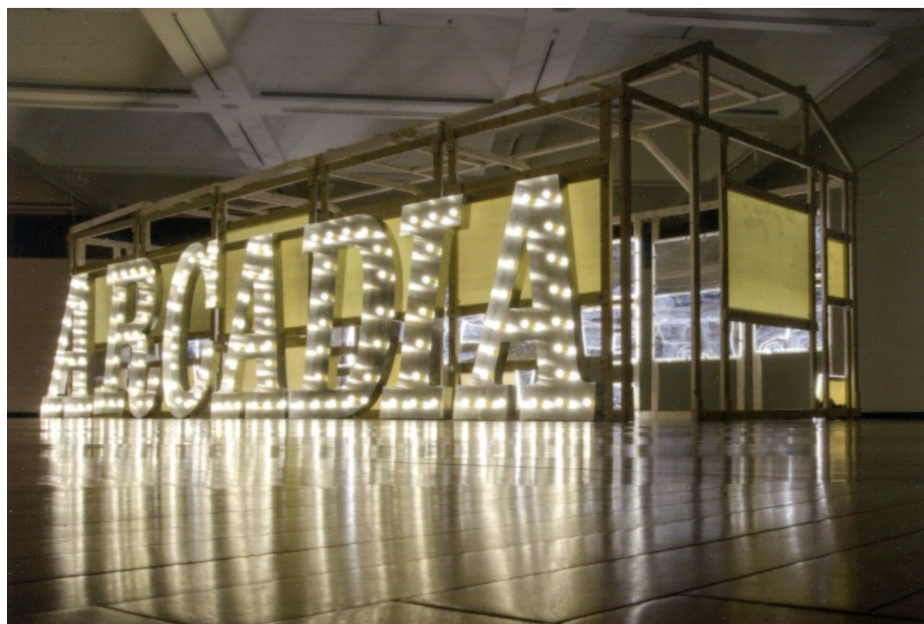
ART | AUG 2017 | BY DÁNIEL KUNITZ FRESH DIRECT



Ellen Harvey with *Atlantis* (in progress), 2017. Photograph by Jan Baracz.

Ellen Harvey's initial foray into public art was a series of illegal acts. From 1998 to 2001, early in her career, she secretly painted bucolic, decidedly retro landscapes set in elegant ovals on dumpsters, buildings, girders and other spots in New York City. Part of the mystery of the work, known as *The New York Beautification Project*, was how unlikely a graffiti artist Harvey was. Born in England, she had graduated from Harvard and received a law degree from Yale before entering the Whitney Independent Studies Program. Since then she's gone legit, showing in numerous museums and galleries, and yet she's never given up on public art.

Standing in her modest, Williamsburg, Brooklyn studio, where an enormous black-and-white satellite view of Miami Beach and the Everglades blankets the walls, she explains that her ambitions were always broader than the narrow economy of those who can afford to buy her work. Public art allows her to produce something that many people will interact with, and it provides the challenge of more direct communication. "People are seeing it in the midst of lots of competing stimuli," she says, "and they're not there primarily to look at your artwork, if at all, so it has to really grab their attention."



Ellen Harvey's *Arcade/Arcadia*, 2012. Photograph by Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences.