

## ART Exhibit covers broad spectrum

# Public art takes novel approach to involvement

By Harold Haydon

Public art is taking novel forms as artists, architects, planners and civic authorities seek new ways of stimulating involvement in the experience of art.

The exhibition "Sites and Solutions: Recent Public Art," in Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois at Chicago, 400 S. Field, through Feb. 2, presents a broad spectrum of works created since 1980.

Beyond question, the masterpiece in this exhibit is Maya Ying Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., represented by three soft-focus pastel drawings that stated her original idea, a landscape model of the memorial and photographs. Combining simplicity of form with the poignant appeal of 88,000 names, the marker oblate "V" of polished black granite stirred controversy even as it drew people to it as few monuments ever have.

Designed by a 21-year-old undergraduate architecture student at Yale University who is a native of Athens, Ohio, it was selected from 1,425 entries by a distinguished jury that included two Chicagoans, sculptor Richard Hunt and architect Harry Weese. Lin's imagina-

tive break from past history in national war memorials rebounds to the lasting credit of both artist and jury.

More conventional public art is represented by Richard Haas' scale drawing for the vast mural on two sides of the Reliable Corp. building complex beside the Eisenhower Express, just west of the gallery, and Joyce Kozloff's underglaze-painted ceramic tile murals in the entrance to the Wilmington, Del., train station.

Haas' trompe l'oeil architectural fantasies, which sometimes include reflections of buildings that once were, or never were, certainly add to the visual pleasures of city life. Kozloff's smaller, more intense, more tangible and vividly colorful ceramic walls echo the decorative arts of the past while capping her own efforts as a pattern painter.

A modern problem finds solution in Harriet Freigenbaum's reclamation project for three sites totaling 82 acres in the Storm Pit strip mine near Scamton, Pa. Her large drawing pictures insulating lines of grapevines to be planted on one of the sites. Another site is planted with 4,000 pine trees, while the third has 2,000 black walnut trees in a radiating spiral design. Chi-



Joyce Kozloff's glazed ceramic tiles grace the vestibule of the Wilmington, Del., train station.

ago's equivalent landscape artwork, although hardly reclamation, is Chapman Kelly's "Chicago Wildflower Works Number 1," in Grant Park scheduled to burst into bloom next spring in two beds the size of football fields.

Christo's large-scale, short-lived, artist-financed "Surrounded Islands" project in Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Fla., also qualifies as an environmental work. Eleven islands were surrounded by 200-foot-wide collars of floating pink fabric for two weeks. Drawings and photographs are in the exhibit.

Environment for contemplation resulted from Robert Irwin's "Nine Spaces, Nine Trees" project in downtown Seattle. The nine 23-foot-square interconnecting

"rooms," each with a central plant tree in a planter that also provides seating, have high chain link walls covered with blue nylon, providing an island of calm.

High-tech public art is represented by artists' designs displayed before 1.5 million people a day in New York's Times Square on the Spectacular light board, shown at 20-minute intervals during the last two weeks of each month. More than 22 artists contributed the animated sequences. Artist and filmmaker Bill Bisset reintroduced an early form of moving picture to give New York subway riders a glimpse of animated abstract art as they slip past the vacant Myrtle Avenue Station in Brooklyn. His 223-panel, 200-foot-long "Main-

transcope" is viewed through narrow slits.

Finally, down-to-earth people-generated public art is represented by John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres, whose "We Are Family" lifecasts of South Bronx neighborhood people are assembled on walls of buildings as three-dimensional murals. Some portraits are only head and shoulders; one is an exhibit. Others are full-figure.

Chicago equivalents are the Rogers Park Community Sculpture, and Keith Alexander's rooftop paintings. Designer and project leader Lynn Takata directed hundreds of Rogers Park residents in creating a large, ground-hugging sculpture of cement that rises, falls and meanders in a rough circle in the park area of the Pratt Avenue Beach. Clearly reflecting landscape forms and slightly anthropomorphic, the sculpture turns out to be a soul-mate of drifting snow. It is the first sculpture involving community participation to be approved by the Chicago Park District.

Alexander's rooftoppers are white-line patterns on black tar roofing visible to Jefferson Park line CTA riders in the Wicker Park and Logan Square area. The University of Illinois at Chicago graduate began his self-appointed task last summer.

"Sites and Solutions" was organized by Judith Tannenbaum, director of the Freedman Gallery, Albright College, Reading, Pa. Tannenbaum will discuss recent developments in public art at 3 p.m. Monday in Gallery 400. The discussion is open to the public.

Videotapes of the artists and their works in "Sites and Solutions" give the exhibition added dimensions, especially in the animated sequences.