

Artists, students focus on illiteracy with mural

By Patricia Lowry

Since 1990, Squirrel Hill artist Janine Stern has enlivened two city buildings with murals by four Pittsburgh artists.

As president of the non-profit Times Project Organization, which she founded, Stern planned the production and funding of murals by Robert Qualters in Oakland and three other artists on a building in the Strip District.

Now a third mural, the most ambitious yet, is complete and installed on a Heinz USA plant building on the North Side.

The mural was a cooperative venture that teamed two professional artists with five high school students, who explored the subject of literacy. It depicts the obstacles presented by illiteracy as well as the advantages of learning to read.

The literacy topic was Stern's idea and grew out of a desire to make the Times Project murals



Mural on Heinz plant depicts obstacles presented by illiteracy and advantages of learning to read.

more socially relevant.

"With the last two projects we gave the artists a free hand, but I became aware of the capability of sending messages to the public," Stern said.

Titled "Literacy Windows," the mural is a computer-generated collage of images including maps, photographs and found objects. The images were scanned into a computer at Carnegie Mellon University's Studio for Creative Inquiry, where the artists worked out the

final design on a Macintosh computer. That was the beginning of a cross-country production process that had materials traveling from Pittsburgh to Los Angeles to Wooster, Ohio, where the mural was printed on vinyl.

Pittsburgh artists Carolyn Speranza and Lisa Link designed the 20-foot-by-30-foot mural earlier this year along with high school students Heba Ali, Hajara Bey, George Kanakis, Emily Lambert and Daniel Yauger. The five were

attending an after-school arts program at Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, where instructor James Shipman chose them to work on the project. Speranza and Link, who had never worked together before, were selected by a committee from among 24 artist applicants.

In the mural, four open books are suspended in front of a brick wall, with the books held open by hands. The first book shows learn-

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