

Local Artist Explores the Amazing World of Gumballs at The Westchester Mall

📅 January 15, 2021 👤 Examiner Media 👁 1051 Views 📍 White Plains ⌚ 2 min read

By Lindsay Emery

Rye Brook artist Marla Beth Enowitz's new self-described "happy art" installation brings colorful exuberance to the third floor of The Westchester Mall.

But it likely would have never been created if not for the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Gumballs" is meant to appear like a massive gumball machine with the painted windows acting as the bowl of the machine, filled to the brim with brightly colored gumballs.

When the crisis hit in March, Enowitz went back to her self-described medicine: painting.

The heartening response Enowitz received after posting her paintings on social media encouraged her to develop her company, Marla Beth Designs.

The Westchester initially approached Enowitz about a potential pop-up shop in the mall, but due to COVID-19 restrictions, it couldn't be arranged.

Instead, Enowitz was able to tour the vacant stores and pick a site for a mural. When she started looking for inspiration, she thought about how she could fill the vacancy with the most cheerful scene that could entertain all ages.

"Originally when I was painting, the interest was that people are stuck at home in their four walls and it's gloomy and they wanted something to brighten up their space," Enowitz explained. "So I wanted to apply that to a public art display where you could take a photo, you could take a selfie and just have something cheerful to look at."

Enowitz, who recently moved back to Rye Brook to raise her children, said she remembers when the mall opened during her junior year in high school and finds it upsetting that there are so many vacancies.



Rye Brook native's colorful "Gumball" mural at The Westchester Mall in White Plains.

"It's a little haunting to see the one-way street that they have taped out and everyone in masks," Enowitz said. "So I just thought, what would be friendly, what would make someone smile even beneath their mask, and I just thought candy is so happy."

Despite COVID precautions preventing Enowitz from adding a real gumball machine near her mural, she was determined to create something positive and upbeat.

"In a non-COVID world, I wanted to have a huge gumball machine outside the store and kids could actually put in the quarter and get the old-fashioned gumball, and that was my vision," said Enowitz, who is currently searching for a suitable spot to create her next mural. "So, of course, there were no real gumballs to eat, but it did turn out looking like a big glass jar of gumballs."

Over two weeks, Enowitz prepped and painted the windows of the 600-square-foot storefront that had been last occupied by Justice, a fashion store for girls. She worked seven-hour days for six consecutive days to complete the work. Instead of her typical acrylic paints, she used children's washable tempera paint so that she could use similar materials that kids would use. It also didn't hurt that it could be easily washed away.

As Enowitz painted from inside the store, she was able to see the positive reactions to her installation firsthand. Children ran up to the glass and adults started taking pictures.

The mural can be viewed until the storefront is leased.

To learn more about Marla Beth Designs, visit www.marlabethdesigns.com.