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ART AROUND TOWN

A Covered Wagon Will Roll Into DUMBO

By **KATE TAYLOR**

As part of its effort to promote DUMBO as an arts neighborhood, the major landlord in the area, Two Trees Management, has arranged for a large bronze sculpture by the artist Tom Otterness to be installed on a grassy hill bordered by Washington and Prospect streets and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. It will be unveiled on April 15 and will remain in place until January 2009.

"Large Covered Wagon" was one of 25 sculptures by Mr. Otterness that were displayed for two months in 2004 on the medians along Broadway between 60th and 168th streets. Since then, it has traveled around the country, with stops in Indianapolis, Grand Rapids, Mich., and Beverly Hills.

"Large Covered Wagon" shows a hearty pioneer woman sitting at the front of a wagon driving a rather bulbous bull. Like many of Mr. Otterness's works, it has a simplified, cartoon-like quality.

Mr. Otterness did his first variation on the theme as part of a commission for a plaza outside the Sacramento Federal Courthouse, which included images from the history of California and the development of the West. Later, he did a larger

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RAGING BULL Tom Otterness's 'Large Covered Wagon' gets shiny for DUMBO next month.

POLICH TALLIX

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version for Pioneer Park in Walla Walla, Wash. The one that has traveled the country and is now landing in Brooklyn is the third version.

In an interview, Mr. Otterness said he was looking forward to seeing the sculpture in its new location, where the wagon and bull will be visible by people on foot, as well as by passing traffic on the BQE. Although the subject is historically inspired, he sees it also as a take on the timeless theme of the American road trip.

"There's Mom with the pipe, and Dad is the bull, pulling the wagon, and out the back the two kids are strangling each other," he said, laughing. "It's that classic cross-country station wagon trip we all took as kids."

The land is owned by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, which gave permission for the sculpture to be installed. The Dumbo Improvement District also lent support.

Jed Walentas, who runs Two Trees Management with his father, David, said that he hopes this will be the first of a series of major public art installations in the neighborhood. "We want to try

this and get it up and running and work out the kinks," he said, adding that he sees "lots of untapped opportunities" for public art in the neighborhood.

Mr. Walentas and Two Trees' cultural affairs director, Zannah Mass, selected Mr. Otterness for the first project because he had his studio in the neighborhood for many years. He rented first from Two Trees and then from another landlord. Today, he has a 17,000-square-foot studio in Gowanus, where he is his own landlord.

"As soon as the health food stores and the dry cleaners showed up, it was kind of time to get moving," Mr. Otterness said without bitterness.

"Large Covered Wagon" is currently getting a new patina at Polich Art Works in Rock Tavern, N.Y. Among the enjoyable aspects of doing public art, Mr. Otterness said, is that he can see directly which parts of the sculpture children like best, by seeing where they rub the patina off by climbing or sitting on it. "It actually makes for the easiest maintenance when the kids use it," he said. "They're polishing and cleaning it every time they get on."