

The Revolving Museum (Lowell, MA)



As part of the 20th anniversary of the Revolving Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts, its exhibition centered on the inactive railroad tracks in the city, including Dream Locomotive, created by Nora Valdez with 100 students from the Lowell Community Charter School. Photo by Meghan Kriegel

The Revolving Museum of Lowell, Massachusetts is an organization of artists founded in 1984 by artistic director Jerry Beck. For the past 20 years, it has created multidisciplinary projects in unused spaces, from an abandoned Civil War-era fort to a 100-year-old rum cellar. Each of these pieces has tried to incorporate members of the surrounding community in an effort to create public art that is truly by and for the public.

For its 20th anniversary in 2003, it paid tribute to its first installation in a series of forgotten railway cars by creating an exhibition centered on the railroad. LocalMotive: Public Art Off the Beaten Path was a series of public artworks, exhibitions, and community events revolving around the inactive railroad tracks in Lowell. The project was supported by an FY 2003 NEA Creativity grant of \$26,000.



The Light at the End of the Tunnel: Community Art Train, created by Jerry Beck with students from the J. G. Pyne Arts Magnet School. Photo by Meghan Kriegel

The outdoor exhibition was opened in conjunction with the Lowell Folk Festival, where nearly 200,000 visitors viewed the pieces on display. Twelve large works were created by 16 artists and hundreds of local students and community members. The pieces were scattered around the city, placed over unused railroad tracks, in empty alleys, and on canal ways. Works included a hundred-foot-long mural on the side of a wooden train, a two-story art tower, and a giant wheel made out of fabric.

In addition to the outdoor exhibit, several interactive works were put on display at the museum. Visitors were invited to interact with the pieces, create their own works of art, and in some cases alter existing sculptures. In total, more than 2,000 people contributed to the creation of the

artwork in the gallery.

(From the 2003 NEA Annual Report)