

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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'Yellow Trees' Growing

By Laura Kusisto



DDG Partners

A rendering of a section of Yayoi Kusama's 'Yellow Trees,' which will be on netting covering 345 W. 14th St.

The black netting that typically drapes buildings under construction around New York City can look like shrouds, each of them etching a forlorn negative space into the skyline. The netting going up on a Manhattan site next week will look more like a celebration.

A striking bumble bee-colored contemporary work—a 120-foot reproduction of "Yellow Trees" by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama—will cover a new condo project at 345 W. 14th St.

It will remain until Sept. 30, coinciding with an exhibition of the artist's work at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The image will be familiar to many New Yorkers: It also has been prominently featured in an advertising campaign for the heavily promoted exhibition.

The idea grew out of the Urban Canvas project, a 2010 city-supported competition to beautify construction sites. The public cast nearly 4,000 votes to choose four winners, including Brooklyn-based artist Mauricio Lopez, who designed art for a 228-foot-long construction fence along Atlantic Avenue at the Atlantic Yards construction site in downtown Brooklyn.

The West 14th Street project marks the first time an artwork has been commissioned for a construction site outside that competition. In addition, most of the display has been somewhat more modest, plastered on construction fences rather than wrapped around an entire building. One Urban Canvas project partially wrapped a building.

The netting, which is used to keep construction materials and workers from falling to the ground below, has typically been required to be blank.

Joe McMillan, chief executive of DDG Partners, which is developing the building, said it was more costly to get the unique design printed and more time-consuming to get special city approvals. But he said he hoped it would help set the Meatpacking District project apart.

"You have to design the netting, print the netting, install the netting, and we worked with the artists' gallery...there are costs for that," Mr. McMillan said. "The benefit for us is that we get to do something for the city. There are lots of things that we do as developers that make our projects special."

The piece was suggested by Ms. Kusama's studio in Japan and can be seen from the nearby High Line park. The cost of the project was in the six figures, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Adam Weinberg, director of Whitney Museum of American Art, conceded that a construction site is an atypical spot for art but noted that it will help create public awareness as the museum prepares to open a downtown location in 2015.

"The great thing about art is it can be anywhere and it can potentially be anything. It can be underfoot, it can be up above," Mr. Weinberg said.