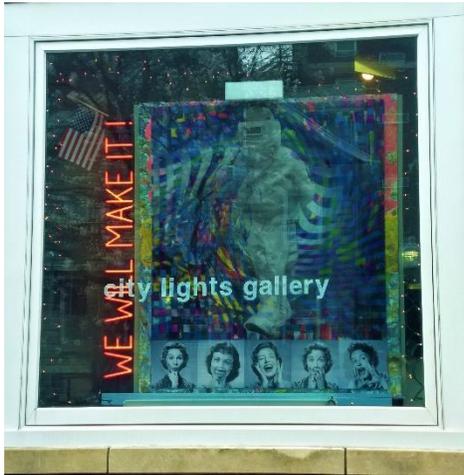


“WE WILL MAKE IT” Lenticular and mixed media by Dan Makara

The 5ft x 5ft multimedia piece incorporates neon light and lenticular photography. Lenticular photographs are prints that move, change to seem to be three dimensional. Specialized optical lenticular lenses are used to create photographs with an illusion of depth or movement when the image is viewed from different angles. Arts enthusiasts of a certain age may remember the lenticular “prize” found in every box of Cracker Jack

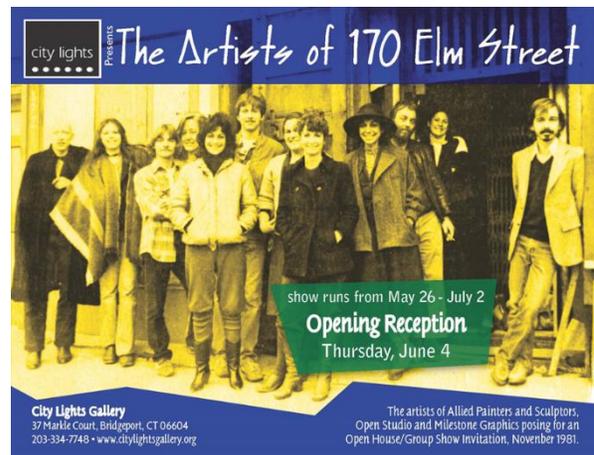


“WE WILL MAKE IT!” is the message in a piece of art by Dan Makara. The reassuring words are a neon beacon shining from the window of City Lights gallery in downtown Bridgeport at 265 Golden Hill St. The words of encouragement are part of a construction that melds retro science Fiction B movie aesthetic with the jarring reality of the COVID19 nightmare we are now living. A lenticular image of a healthcare worker in a hazmat suit walks through a twilight zone vortex of vibrating colors. Vintage 50’s faces of women applaud the effort. Viewers of a certain age may remember the lenticular images that came as prizes inside every box of Cracker Jack.

Makara’s work frequently expresses irony, and dark humor, which may be just what we need to rappel us forward. It is a bizzarro time we are living, harkening back to the days of duck and cover-nuclear bomb safety training, as the public then and now relies on the government to provide the proper information about precautions and protocol. The ‘We’ in this statement is critical, we are all required to pull together to be responsible for our actions, be proactive and to remain positive and kind, to others and ourselves.



This is just one example of how artists are using their art to work offer comfort and support during a difficult time. City Lights is grateful to Dan Makara for sharing his art and his vision once again with Bridgeport. In 1981 Makara and a small group of artists and musicians started Bridgeport’s first City Lights coffee house on Fairfield Ave in the downtown. This was pre-coffee shop chains. The gathering place was prompted by the need of an arts social venue for the artists and patrons of The Elm St artists at 170 Elm Street.



City Lights Gallery
37 Marble Court, Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-334-7748 • www.citylightsgallery.org

The artists of Allied Painters and Sculptors,
Open Studio and Milestone Graphics posing for an
Open House/Group Show Invitation, November 1981.

Artist lights way for arts

By ANTHONY P. SPINELLI JR.
Telegram staff writer

About a month ago, Bridgeport artist Dan Makara was standing on a ladder scraping paint from a boarded storefront in downtown Bridgeport that had been unused for 15 years.

"This place is going to be one of the best looking galleries you've ever seen," he told a passerby. The stranger said Makara was pipe dreaming.

But Makara knew something about the storefront at 300 Fairfield Ave. that the passerby didn't: beneath decades worth of paint was an antique copper facade with leaded windows; behind layers of wallpaper, 100-year-old ornate tin walls.

"The whole place," Makara said, "is a relic from the 19th century. It's old Bridgeport — and I'm willing to bet there are dozens more buildings downtown that have the same hidden assets.

Appropriately, the nearly-completed gallery, "City Lights," takes its name from a classic film of the silent era. Doubling as a coffeehouse, it's main floor and loft will showcase the city's painters, sculptors, poets, and traditional, ethnic, and jazz musicians.

"Bridgeport has a good number of underground creative artists who have no place to go public with their work," said Makara, a co-founder of the gallery-music room. "But now there's 'City Lights.' With any luck, a lot of local culture is going to surface here."

Through some miracle, "City Lights" has not been brushed off as an impossible dream by the city's background voices; rather, it has "been given the blessings" of the Mandanici administration, has received financial and moral support from the Chamber of Commerce, and has been promised cash contributions by Connecticut National Bank, Peoples Savings Bank, and State National.

"Clearly, a lot of people are enthusiastic about 'City Lights,'" said Bill Bevacqua, a spokesman for the Chamber of Commerce. "As for the Chamber, we would not be able to find it within ourselves to not stand behind the efforts of Makara and his friends to get 'City Lights' going. We've heard cries for years



Telegram photo by Chris Hatch

Bridgeport musician Jim Moss brushes down the antique copper facade of City Lights, a nearly-completed art gallery and coffeehouse in downtown Bridgeport.

that a project such as theirs is what downtown Bridgeport has needed for a long time."

Part of the appeal "City Lights" has had for the Chamber is Makara's plan to accommodate downtown workers on lunch breaks. "We'll have tables for them to relax at, a selection of exotic teas and coffees, a salad bar, and a variety of exhibits," Makara said. "If we're lucky, we'll also have matinee performances."

The plans for "City Lights" continued financial support are clear and simple: the non-profit business will pay its extremely reasonable rent and operating fees by taking a percentage of the cover

charge for live performances and levying a 15 percent commission from the sale of art exhibited there.

Additional funds can be solicited from local banks with the help of Ruben Abreau, a gallery co-founder who is in charge of outside funding appropriations.

With early support shown by local banks and the Chamber of Commerce, Makara and company are confident of their venture's longevity. Another hurdle they don't lose sleep over is the possibility that the building's landlord will capitalize on their renovation of the former paint store and lease the spot to a business that will pay higher rent.

THURS July 23 1981