



Small Navy Yard Park Pays Homage to Facility's Past

by Raanan Geberer (), published online 06-01-2010

Many Materials Were Recycled From Ships

By Raanan Geberer
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BROOKLYN NAVY YARD — To the uninitiated, it might look like a nice mini-park with tables and chairs within the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

It is definitely that, but it's also more. It's a symbol of the continuity and rebirth of the Navy Yard, uniting the old shipbuilding facility and defense plant with today's state-of-the-art business facility.

The park was designed by Michelle Greene, a metal sculptor who has had her studios in the Navy Yard for 19 years. As she mentions on her web site, her being in the Navy Yard "has inspired me to recycle part of the history of the Navy Yard that would otherwise be discarded."

The three tables in the recently opened small park are made from old ship's doors. Interestingly, she said, the wooden doors had already been recycled before — they had been taken from an old ship and had been used to make a workshop near the dry-dock area. Later, however, the shed also became unused.

As for the interesting-looking wheels on each of the tables, they were once the handles of the ship doors, and were turned to open them, she says. And the top of the metal barbecue was recycled from the cast-aluminum lid of a ship's transmitter box. The barbecue, says Greene, is the only part of the park that isn't installed yet, although it will be put in soon and will be used by the Navy Yard for special events.

Not all of the material that Greene used in the park comes from old ships. Across from the mini-park in the Navy Yard is an old building — being partially demolished but also transformed into a green manufacturing center — which was used as a machine shop during World War II. The walls of the building are a combination of glass block and red brick and were the inspiration for several of the benches that use a glass-block motif.

This is not Greene's first project at the Navy Yard. In 2008, she installed bike racks in the new Perry Street building. These also use recycled material — in this case, steel rails from the freight railroad that once traversed the Navy Yard.

Andrew H. Kimball, president and CEO of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corp., said, "Michelle is really reflective of the small-niche manufacturers and the green manufacturing at the Navy Yard. Seventy percent of the tenants rent 5,000 square feet or less."

Mentioning both the park and the bike rack, Kimball said the Navy Yard is "delighted to be able to contract with Michelle" for the new park.



Michelle Greene designed this new small park inside the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The benches are made from wood recycled from ship's doors, and the wheels on top of the tables once were used to open one of those doors. Photo courtesy of Michelle Greene

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