

# ARTTALK

## Urban Landscape

“What would happen if you made something that’s like graffiti but painted in oils and looks like artwork?” mused **Ellen Harvey**. “Would people think of it as art or graffiti?” And so began the Brooklyn-based artist’s two-year foray

into illegal public art. She painted 40 small, oval-shaped Arcadian landscapes all over New York City—but only on sites where graffiti already existed, like garbage bins and concrete pylons. She chose this classic form of painting because “it’s the opposite of the graffiti aesthetic,” she explains. “For most people, it’s obviously art.”

Not wanting to call official attention to her illegal activity, she abandoned the project in 2001. Only a handful of the “tags” still exist, but photographs of her handiwork appear in the book *New York Beautification Project*, recently published by Gregory R. Miller & Company, alongside diary entries about her experiences. Harvey says jokingly, “I only hope there will be no dire consequences.” —*Julie Brenner*



**Art or graffiti? A landscape “tag” on an East Village staircase by Ellen Harvey.**