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## Chalk Festival marks success in new location

By GEOFF TURNER THE LONDON FREE PRESS

Last Updated: August 3, 2010 8:16am

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It looks like the Imadon Expressions in Chalk Festival settled in nicely to its new home in Wortley Village.

A steady flow of visitors made their way on the weekend to the fifth annual street-painting festival — steady enough that festival co-founder Cheryl Smelser said the event will be back in the village next year.

“This is an artsy neighbourhood,” she said. “There have been lots of crowds and we seem to be very welcome here.”

The festival moved from its previous home on Dundas and Talbot streets after artists complained of the “wind-tunnel effect” among downtown office towers and the lack of complementary neighbourhood activity.

This year the street art was set down on a church parking lot on Bruce St. near Wortley Rd.

The centrepiece of this year’s festival was a lifelike portrait of Terry Fox featuring a Road of Hope on which visitors chaked in the name of a loved one affected by cancer.



Artist Rob Cousins had made good progress on his chalk art entitled

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**Ethiopian Nun by noon Sunday. (SUE REEVE, The London Free Press)**

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Melanie Stimmell Van Latum, one of the principal artists of the Terry Fox mural, said street painting dates back to the 16th century, when war veterans — injured in battle and unable to work — would paint portraits of the Madonna on the stones in front of churches, where wealthy patrons would toss them coins for their efforts.

Like his artistic forebears, artist Rob Cousins chose a religious theme for his entry.

His portrait of an elderly Ethiopian nun was nearly complete by late Sunday afternoon. After drawing an aged aboriginal chief in last year's festival, Cousins found the rough pavement an ideal medium for conveying facial features.

"The old face, a face with a lot of character and wisdom, works really well on this surface," he said.

The parking lot pavement, rougher than the street surface used last year, works well artistically, but not so much for the artist's bodies.

"I don't think I have any fingertips left," Cousins said.

And after a couple of days of working the pavement on their hands and knees, most of the artists were looking a little the worse for wear by Sunday.

The soft pastels they use inevitably wind up smearing clothes and skin, but 16-year-old Jenny Thomas took things to the extreme.

Sitting in the midst of her black and red tribute to Michael Jackson, her legs, arms, face and hair caked with pastel, Thomas looked to be at risk of merging with her creation.

"I just get into my work too much, I guess," said the third-time festival entrant.

And how does an artist cope with the prospect of having one's works washed away in the rain?

"I take lots and lots of pictures," Stimmell Van Latum said.

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I only knew about the festival this year because I asked at the tourism location downtown... and the person had to look it up. I didn't, however, know where it was located. I agree that more advertising needs to be done.

And really, "such fun"... was that necessary?

**Simon, August 3rd 2010, 6:26pm**

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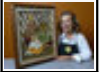
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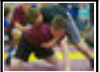
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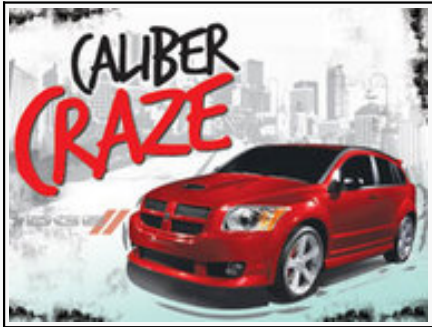
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