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A Museum Exhibition Assembled on the Fly

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FUTURISTIC PUBLIC ART

Every fall for the last 18 years the commons that surround the MetroTech Center — that complex of corporate offices in downtown Brooklyn that are home to Forest City Ratner Companies, JPMorgan Chase and the Polytechnic Institute — have become a playground for public art. Some years there have been sculptures like a giant flattened soccer ball or a seven-foot-tall waffle that looked as though it had been enveloped in thick syrup. There have also been pieces installed in the lobby of MetroTech One. But this year the nonprofit Public Art Fund, which presents art around the city including the annual MetroTech exhibition, is staging “Total Recall,” a show that is larger in scale than anything that has been done there before. The number of artists isn’t especially large, but the pieces are.

For the second year now all the works have been commissioned specifically for the site. “It’s becoming a nice tradition,” said Nicholas Baume, director of the fund.

“Total Recall,” which will be on view from Nov. 3 through Sept. 13, 2011, is made up of young, up-and-coming names like Sam Moyer and Zipora Fried, who are both included in P.S. 1’s “Greater New York,” closing Monday. The other artists are Martin Basher, Matt Sheridan Smith and Kevin Zucker.

“Everyone is playing with the past, the present and the future,” said Jesse Hamerman, assistant curator and project manager of the Public Art Fund, who organized this exhibition. The title of the show is borrowed from the 1990 futuristic film of the same name in which memory informs reality. Mr. Basher, for example, has used the idea of night and day to conjure up a utopian future. He is creating three giant, plexiglass vitrines that are reflective by day but at night reveal their contents: a melding of high and low consumer goods.

Some of the artists have also employed technology as a basis for their work. Mr. Zucker, better known for drawings and painting, is creating what may seem like a disparate group of sculptures fashioned from foam, metal and wood. But the forms for these sculptures are actually the result of his use of the 3-D Google SketchUp modeling application. Another artist, Ms. Moyer, PhotoShopped an image of the Baltic Sea to dress up a group of 55 trees in the center of the commons. “Eventually,” Mr. Hamerman said, “these works will become vestiges of a dated technology.”

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