

September 1, 2002

Alexander Calder Design Is Restored

By Rosalie R. Radomsky

The name of Alexander Calder is synonymous with mobiles that never cease motion and stabiles that sometimes seem poised to leap. But the unique example of his work that is now being restored on Madison Avenue was designed to stay firmly underfoot.

Last week, the zinc strips defining the patterns within the black and white terrazzo work, the only sidewalk ever designed by the artist, were being filled in. The sidewalk was installed in 1970 in front of three buildings at 1014 to 1018, between 78th and 79th Streets.

Cameron Shay, director of the James Graham & Sons Gallery at 1014 Madison, is one of those who pushed for the renovation. "The sidewalk had gone beyond temporary patches and fixes, and we felt it was time for a complete restoration a couple of years ago," he said. "It took time to get approval from the landmarks commission and the Calder Foundation."

The 75-by-12-foot work, costing the building owners \$100,000 to recreate, features three distinct patterns in rustic terrazzo: alternating black and white rectangular blocks in front of No. 1014, black crescents in a white field outside No. 1016 and a black and white sunburst outside No. 1018.

"There's something about it that is so easy to appreciate," said Lisa Kersavage, executive director of **Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts**, who has received 20 inquiries since the sidewalk's uprooting in July.

Work on the restoration began last summer, when rubbings of the sidewalk were done by two Columbia students and Steven Zirinsky, a partner at Zirinsky & Cox, a Long Island City architectural firm, who is overseeing the "in-kind replacement" approved by the Landmark Preservation Commission. "Usually," Mr. Zirinsky noted, "I'm much more creative."

Last week workers from Marble and Terrazzo World in Long Island City filled in patterns formed by half-inch high zinc strips with "Georgia white" and

"raven black" marble chips, no bigger than three-eighths of an inch each..

"It's such an important piece," said Alex Herrera, director of technical services at the New York Landmarks Conservancy, which has been involved in previous repairs. The original terrazzo was done by Foscatto Brothers of Huntington and redone by Benny Locca & Sons of Brooklyn in 1979.

The work, which skirts around a fire hydrant, curb box valve, two tree pits and a parking meter, is expected to be completed this week, depending on the weather and approval from the landmarks commission for new terrazzo for Calder's monogram "CA" and "70." That was year when Dolly and Klaus Perls, who owned the Perls Galleries at No. 1014, Calder's exclusive United States dealer from 1955 until his death in 1976, persuaded the artist and the two neighboring building owners to create a special look for the street.

Then, said Alexander S. C. Rower, director of the Calder Foundation and a grandson of the artist, "Steven Perl, Klaus's nephew, made an architectural drawing of the sidewalk. My grandfather did an ink brush drawing over it, inscribed `foot marks to Steven from Sandy Calder Oct. 70.'

"We're very excited," he said of the restoration, "to see it almost finished and represent Calder's original intention." ROSALIE R. RADOMSKY