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## Aby Rosen's 11 Howard Teams Up With Groundswell and Artist Mentor Jeff Koons to Create Massive Public Mural



**11 Howard**, real estate mogul and RFR co-founder Aby Rosen's latest venture in SoHo, will showcase the work of inspiring young artists thanks to a partnership with **Groundswell**, a New York community mural organization that uses creativity as a tool for change, and mentorship from renowned artist **Jeff Koons**.

The team of youth artists has created a site-specific mural on the hotel's 150 foot-by-50-foot South-facing wall that celebrates the history and culture of SoHo. Music, food, fashion and the industries of yesteryear are featured among the mural's symbols, including a bird on an illuminated wire, which reflects the ambiance in and around SoHo; a crown paying homage to Jean-Michel Basquiat, who was

part of the artistic movement that made SoHo famous in the 1980s; references to Little Italy and the thriving restaurant scene of the area; and the silhouette of a female figure to symbolize the fashion sense and metropolitan spirit of SoHo.

"It's my pleasure to work with the youth group from Groundswell on the Howard Street mural. This is a very creative team of young artists, and it's rare to see a group with such a unified vision. I've enjoyed working with the artists during the conception of their idea," Koons said.

The design of the mural was not only inspired by the neighborhood. The artists from Groundswell – all students – visited Aby Rosen's office at RFR to view pieces from his personal art collection, as well as the neighborhood around 11 Howard. Each artist developed their own design concepts for the mural and then came together to develop a final design that drew on all of their ideas. Misha Tyutyunik – Groundswell's lead artist for the project – refined these concepts to produce a single comprehensive design. The team brought this final design into Jeff Koons' studio for Koons' personal feedback and a creative discussion about what inspires his art, the historical references in the piece, the creative process and use of color. He challenged them to think of ways to add further richness and depth to the mural by layering and varying color, highlighting specific content elements and considering different mediums that could be applied to the brick wall to create variety.

"The design shows the history and culture of SoHo: the music, food, fashion as well as the industries that formerly existed within the neighborhood. It evokes the commercial refinement of present-day SoHo, but also alludes to its spirit of surprise and discovery, encouraging pedestrians to stroll and wander through the winding side streets to window shop, to find new wonders or uncover relics of bygone days. The design is simple yet complex enough to tell the story and capture the energy of the day life and nightlife of SoHo and the surrounding neighborhoods," Tyutyunik said.

The artists initially developed designs that were a kaleidoscope of color, but ultimately decided that black and white would make a more dynamic impact given the monumental scale of the mural and its visibility. They decided to add the accent color of blue to help move the eye around the mural.

The students who designed the mural – who also serve as artist apprentices at Groundswell - are Gabriela Balderas, Anayshah Bashier, Durell Baxter, Nafeesa Davis, Claire Haviland, Nathaniel James, and Publio Lantiqua. Overall Murals, Inc. executed the mural design on the wall at 11 Howard.

Riot.House produced a video and photo of the students and the mural as part of the development project. The video is directed by Pete Maiden, and the photos are by Thomas Law.

Since 1996, Groundswell has been New York City's leading organization dedicated to community public art, bringing together youth, artists and community partners to make public art that advances social change for a more just and equitable world. These projects beautify neighborhoods, engage youth in societal and personal transformation and give expression to ideas and perspectives that are underrepresented in the public dialogue.

For more information and to book a reservation, visit <http://www.11howard.com/>. 11 Howard is part of Design Hotels Inc.

For more information on Groundswell, visit [www.groundswell.nyc](http://www.groundswell.nyc).

