

# Klairmont paintings depict best side of all

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When Highland Park artist Yelena Klairmont arrived at the Northwestern Train Station in Chicago on Sept. 11, 2001, the streets seemed deserted.

"Everyone was closing stores near the station and Sears Tower," said Klairmont, who had gone to the city to attend classes at the American Academy of Art.

Her husband reached her by cell phone to tell her two passenger planes had flown into the World Trade Center in New York.

"It was so awful," she said. "After that, everything became so unimportant. Everything became secondary."

Later, in her studio, Klairmont began to repaint an incomplete canvas she had of a model sitting on a bench. The painting would become "Momentary Pause." For her next painting, she decided her model would wear firefighter gear. That painting would become "Resolve and Action."

Both pictures will be dedicated at 5:30 p.m. May 22 in the lobby of the Fire Station at 1130 Central Ave. Each painting is on permanent loan to the city.

"We don't have anything else like this," said Deputy Chief Alan Wax of the fire department.

"Both of them represent the best, heroic side of all of us," Klairmont said.

The two paintings are part of a series. The third painting depicts the World Trade Center

ruins; the fourth will feature a police officer; the fifth shows a firefighter.

Klairmont considers it appropriate that one of the paintings will be displayed at the Highland Park Fire Station.

"Highland Park firefighters went to ground zero," she said. "They brought gifts and helped out. It's a topic that I think is ongoing. They're meant to be exhibited in a public space."

Her second painting, also on permanent loan, will be displayed at the Public Works Department on Half Day Road.

"I'm working on another series about the ravines of Highland Park," Klairmont said. "The ravines are outstanding."

She is about to complete the winter series of ravine portraits and start spring and summer paintings.

"The ravines are always going to be there," she said. "They're beautiful and they change."

The painting to commemorate Sept. 11, 2001 is her first topical series of portraits. To create them she met with firefighters, Deputy Fire Chief Alan Wax and Highland Park police officers.

Wax said the firefighters showed Klairmont the equipment to help her with her work.

The Fire Department has invited Highland Park firefighters to display photographs and other remembrances from their visits to New York City in the months after the World Trade Center buildings were destroyed, said Wax. Some Highland Park firefighters went at their own expense to New York City to help the fire department, he said.



Highland Park artist Yelena Klairmont created this painting entitled "Resolve and Action" after the Sept. 11, 2001 tragedy. This and another of her works will be dedicated at 5:30 p.m. May 22 in the lobby of the Highland Park fire station at 1130 Central Ave.