

# amcityliving

Text and photos by Justin Rocket Silverman, edited by Kate George (kate.george@am-ny.com)

**am**  
 NEW YORK

## TALKING ABOUT

### Character and Context:

Alexander Krivosheiw has been crafting his immense bronze sculptures in a ground-floor studio on Water Street in DUMBO for more than six years. The pieces can weigh many thousands of pounds and moving them around in a freight elevator is not an easy thing to do.

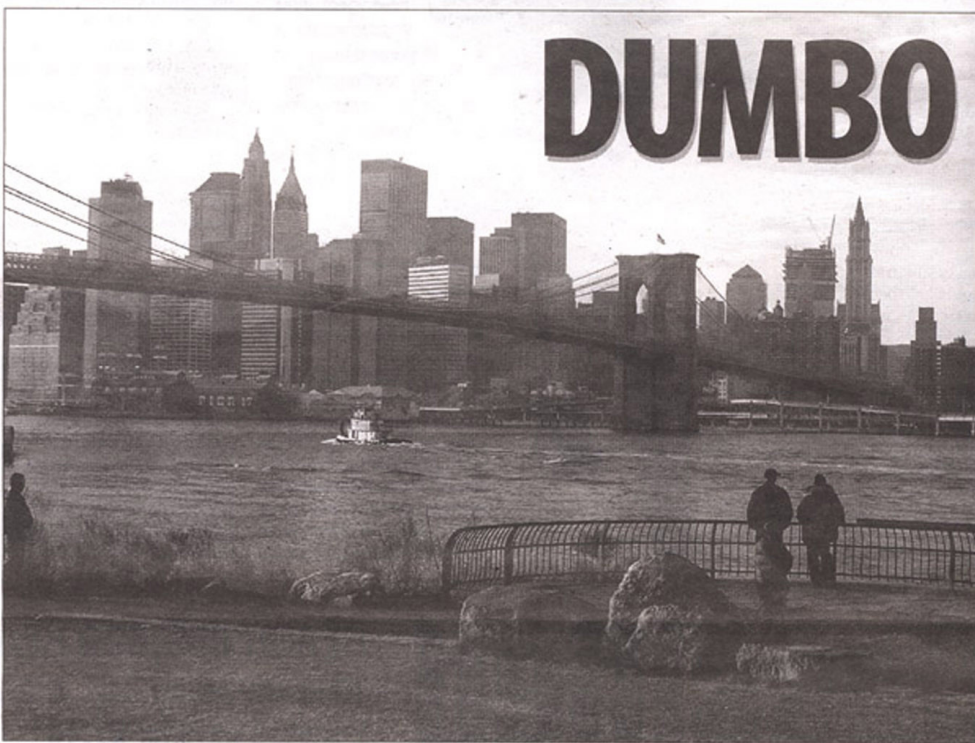
But in the next few weeks, the 28-year-old artist will be doing just that, because he, like countless other self-employed artists in DUMBO, can no longer afford to pay the rent.

"I feel more connection to this neighborhood than anything else I've ever been a part of," Krivosheiw told amNewYork. "It was almost like 'Cheers,' seeing the same faces around all the time.

That's all ending now."

Just a single stop on the F line from Chinatown and the Lower East Side and home to some of the best views of downtown in Brooklyn or any other borough, DUMBO remained a virtually unknown gem for decades. Short for "Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass," the neighborhood was, until 1998, zoned almost exclusively for the industrial businesses that occupied blocks of towering warehouses.

That doesn't mean that nobody was living there to enjoy the stunning views and streets that are eerily quiet after dark. It means that almost nobody was living there legally. "It was all very secretive," said one 10-year DUMBO resident. "You just paid the



The priceless city views on the DUMBO waterfront have become a real estate cash cow in the past five years.

landlord every month and he never asked what you did with the space. And you knew other people were living nearby, but you knew better than to ask specifics."

After the zoning change, this resident, who asked not to be named, saw his rent increase from \$800 per month to \$3,300 per month. His response was to "move

deeper into Brooklyn." There was a time when what we now know as DUMBO was called Fulton's Landing after the ferry services that at one point were making up to

1,000 trips across the East River every day. With the ferries steaming back and forth, Fulton's Landing was the commercial hub of Brooklyn. But when the Brooklyn Bridge was opened in 1883 and then the Manhattan Bridge in 1909, the ferries stopped running and Fulton's Landing descended into the anonymity that was so appealing to the artists who moved there in the '70s and renamed it DUMBO.

For the moment, DUMBO retains its place as one of the most distinctive and interesting neighborhoods in New York. The regular rumble of subway cars on the Manhattan Bridge sounds like a perpetual thunderstorm over the streets, and the riverfront views are impeccable. But a Starbucks coffee shop recently opened in DUMBO, and, although nothing has been signed yet, Krivosheiw believes a GAP clothing store will be moving in to replace his ground-floor sculpting studio.



A recent exhibit at Smack Mellon included magnetized strips that invited the viewer to become the artist.

### AVERAGE RENT

Studio \$1,700

1 bed. \$2,700

2 bed. \$4,000

### TheXpo at Gallerie

63 Pearl St.  
 (718) 797-2557

Jan Larsen loves DUMBO, he just thinks the name has too many circus connotations. Thus his business cards say "New Tribeca, Brooklyn," a nod to what the neighborhood has become. Larsen runs this impressive gallery space as a for-profit business, and believes that if artists want to continue living and working in "New Tribeca," they better get serious about making some cash.

### Smack Mellon

56 Water St.  
 (718) 834-8791

One of the first non-profit art galleries in DUMBO, Smack Mellon occupies a large, multi-level raw space that provides room for a variety of mechanical and suspended installations. The gallery includes a studio space for metal and wood-working and is gearing up to launch a fellowship program that will provide financial support for artists to do their thing without starving to death.

### St. Ann's Warehouse

38 Water St.  
 (718) 254-8779

This longtime staple of the not-Broadway theater scene resides in a former spice milling warehouse. The theater commissions work from musical and visual artists who create theatrical performances. The theater recently opened "Accidental Nostalgia," a play about the "pros and cons of amnesia."