

Artist repairing Untermyer Park temple, mosaics



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(Photo: Seth Harrison/The Journal News)

Medusa is getting a makeover.

Repair work on cracks and a large hole at the Temple of the Sky at Untermyer Park and Gardens in Yonkers will allow the temple to reopen to the public and preserve the mosaic while the conservancy that cares for the garden raises more money for long-term repairs.

Yonkers artist Haifa Bint-Kadi began the repairs last month and expects to finish by the Untermyer Gardens Conservancy's June 16 [Summer Solstice Sunset Soiree](#).

"There is the cleaning, sealing, repair and then restoration," said Bint-Kadi, who has around 12 of her colorful mosaics in Yonkers and 65 throughout Westchester County. "Restoration of the Medusa mosaic is probably the most challenging because people have taken tiles out over the years so I've had to go out and source those tiles and almost no one makes marble in half-inch any more so I have to take three-quarter inch or one-inch tiles and cut them into half-inch pieces."

[SOIREE: Kate Upton will visit Untermyer Gardens](#)

Bint-Kadi's restoration work won't fix all the problems with the large Roman-style mosaic on the Grecian temple's floor. The \$6,000 project co-funded by the conservancy and Groundwork Hudson Valley only focuses on cracks, bulges and a large hole under the Medusa image that lies at the center of the large mosaic.

Medusa is a monster from Greek mythology generally described as a winged female with snakes for hair. In antiquity, the image of Medusa was used on buildings or jewelry to deflect evil.

The gardens' designer William Welles Bosworth chose the image of Medusa for the mosaic because in Greek mythology she is the offspring of two water gods and the Temple of the Sky sits between the Hudson River and the canals in the Persian-style garden that represent four ancient rivers.

Past repairs where cement was poured to fill in holes where tiles were lost will be left for a future restoration. Much of the damage to the mosaics was caused by the elements, particularly water that seeped under the tiles, froze, then lifted the tiles from their base, much like potholes on a road.



Artist Haifa Bint Kadi sets down a piece of mosaic at Untermyer Gardens in Yonkers. (Photo: Seth Harrison/The Journal News)

Medusa's eyes, which were partially gouged out by vandals, may not get fixed.

"We've got bigger problems to worry about," said Stephen F. Byrns, the president of the Untermyer Gardens Conservancy. "That round temple needs some pretty dramatic structural remediation. When that is done we'll look more closely at replacing the missing mosaic."

The repair costs facing the century-old Untermyer Park and Gardens are huge. Byrns estimated that repair work on the Temple of the Sky could range from \$600,000 to more than \$1 million.

Fixing the pool that lies below the Temple of the Sky will be even more expensive. Byrns estimated those repairs to cost at least \$2 million.