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PHL Airport Celebrates 20 Years of Uniquely Philadelphia Exhibitions Program

PHILADELPHIA — In 2018, Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) celebrates the 20th anniversary of its Exhibitions Program, which promotes the visual arts and culture of the Greater Philadelphia region to more than 30 million passengers who pass through PHL annually.

Since the program's inception in 1998 as one of the first in U.S. airports, PHL has presented more than 425 rotating exhibits and artist demonstrations throughout all seven terminals. Often coinciding with city-wide events, the exhibits present Philly-centric themes and artwork.

The current exhibit in Terminal A-East recognizes Philadelphia's designation as the nation's first World Heritage City by the International Organization of World Heritage Cities. It features a montage of Philadelphia's 67 National Historic Landmarks and Independence Hall, the City's UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Other exhibits in the terminals today include Christine Larsen's *Farewell to the Night*, a 100-foot-long illustration of an imagined landscape where mystical characters celebrate the coming of morning, and *Custom Bikes*, which showcases hand-made bicycles from 5 different local bike shops.

Over the years, the exhibits have featured a variety of media including painting, photography, printmaking, wood working, ceramics, glass, and found objects such as a 20-foot clock made of hundreds of empty Yuengling beer bottles.

"The artwork at PHL exposes passengers to the City's vibrant cultural life," said Airport CEO Chellie Cameron. "Our airport is the passengers' first introduction to the City and I'm proud to say it's a creative and positive one."

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The Exhibitions Program was founded by PHL Director of Image and Chief Curator Leah Douglas, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Temple University's Tyler School of Art. Douglas chooses the themes and invites youth and professional artists, arts organizations and cultural institutions to be featured.

PHL frequently collaborates with regional museums and institutions to showcase their collections or educational programs, including the African American Museum in Philadelphia, The Clay Studio, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Fort Mifflin, Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia History Museum, and the Wagner Free Institute of Science of Philadelphia, as well as the School District of Philadelphia.

On display now is an exhibition that spotlights Woodmere Art Museum located in the Chestnut Hill section of Philadelphia.

"I am grateful to be working in Philadelphia with so many amazingly talented artists," said Douglas. "The abundance of arts, cultural, and historical institutions make my job easy."

In the summer, Douglas will unveil an exhibition entitled *It's a Wrap: 20 for 20* installed between Terminals A-East and B. It will feature 20 artists who will create site-specific interventions such as wrapping existing rockers and columns in yarn and hand-painting ceiling tiles for a memorable visual experience for travelers.

Now on display in Terminal D, *Her Philadelphia* by artist Sarah McEneaney is a visual diary of her life that references Rail Park – a location that for more than 10 years McEneaney has worked tirelessly to transform and revitalize the unused elevated rail line into a vibrant community park. Today, her dream is being realized as this project is currently under construction.

While most exhibits are located post-security and may be viewed by ticketed passengers, the following are pre-security and are accessible to the public: *Public Art Philadelphia*, Terminal A-West; *Inspirations of Watercolorist Charles Demuth* by Kipp Dubois Collegiate Academy, Philadelphia, Terminal A-East Bag Claim; *How Philly Moves* and the Airport's pop-up theater now showing *POPPYN* – Temple University's award-winning youth news program – both located in Terminal B-C bag claim.

Philadelphia artists featured in past exhibits include Adam Wallacavage, who creates imaginative chandeliers inspired by sea creatures such as octopus, jellyfish and sea anemones, and artist Leroy Johnson, known for his imagery of urban Philadelphia.

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PHL's Exhibitions Program has influenced other U.S. airports including Portland International Airport (PDX), which featured Philadelphia artist James Dupree after his *Evolving Elements* mural debuted in 2010 at PHL.

In October 2018, PHL will host the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) Arts in the Airports Workshop for the second time in 15 years.

"For 20 years, the Exhibitions Program at Philadelphia International Airport has elevated the best emerging and professional artists of our region," said Kelly Lee, Chief Cultural Officer, of the City of Philadelphia Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy. "This important milestone is even more cause to celebrate the diverse and talented art and cultural community that thrives in this city."

In 2013, *USA Today* voted PHL as one of the Top 3 Best Airport Art Programs in the United States. In 2014, PHL was the recipient of the Arts & Business Partnership Award: Large Business with an Arts Organization awarded by the Arts and Business Council of Greater Philadelphia.



World Heritage City exhibition located in Terminal A-East



Her Philadelphia by Philadelphia artist Sarah McEneaney on display in Terminal D

Philadelphia International Airport is owned and operated by the City of Philadelphia. The Airport is a self-supporting entity that operates without the use of local tax dollars. It is one of the largest economic engines in Pennsylvania, generating an estimated \$15.4 billion in spending annually and supporting more than 96,300 full-time jobs for the 11-county Philadelphia MSA.