

Airport engages mural art with 'How Philly Moves'

Bobbi Booker
Tribune Staff Writer

For the past few months, travelers along I-95 have witnessed the transformation of the Philadelphia International Airport's parking garage. The structure's once plain facade has undergone a facelift with a mural entitled "How Philly Moves" — a nearly 85,000 square foot mural incorporating the photographic work of artist and designer Jacques-Jean "JJ" Tiziou. The project was produced in cooperation with the City of Philadelphia Office of Transportation and Utilities and modifies the garages into a memorable "gateway" for travelers and visitors to the region, adding spectacular beauty and color to the airport's landscape and enlivening the travel experience of millions. The mural took two years to complete and four months to install. The mural is the largest square footage of any project ever completed in the over 3,500 created by the Mural Arts Program, and is among the largest murals created in the United States.

"We are checking, but this may possibly be the largest mural in the world — and where else, but Philadelphia," said Mayor Michael A. Nutter during the recent dedication. "People across the country are

looking at this, coming to see it and talk about it, especially this specific mural, 'How Philly Moves.'"

Lead artist Tiziou photographed over 18,000 frames of 174 dancers of all ages, style, ability, race and gender, and the final design features images of 26 Philadelphians dancing, some over 60 feet high. Lead muralist Jonathan Laidacker and his team of assistants then created, painted and installed 1,504 panels of parachute cloth needed to make up the mural.

"'How Philly Moves' is based on our longstanding commitment to public art," explained Nutter. "It's also about the celebration of the community. Over a thousand people worked on this mural and have been engaged in the education and design component. That really is the power of art — to bring people together to provide something that is so visually appealing, but is also unifying. I think that we have literally transformed the streetscape and the landscape and the view and vision of what Philly International Airport is all about."

Over 1,000 people contributed to the painting as part of the community involvement process. The How Philly Moves project builds on Philadelphia's mission to the production of public art and has established a dynamic and iconic new

"postcard" image for the city.

"Let's hear it for art!" enthused Jane Golden, Director, City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program. "This is mural 3,665 — indoor and outdoor, big and little murals — created since 1984. I want you to think for a minute about art and the impact that it has and what it does to a city, and what it's done over time. Think about all the public sculpture and art in this city. We are just part of this extraordinary collection of art in this city, and what art does is it inspires, it enlivens, it connects us to all that is human. And, you know, art for art's sake is great in itself, but then there is something beyond that. Creative placemaking is that wonderful intersection between economic development, design and art, and it's all about enlivening public spaces in the city, so it's something that goes beyond what you see on a wall. Think about what an iconic project this is, and how it is this visual statement about the incredible dance community. It put people to work, it changed this parking structure so this is art and economic development."

Contact Tribune
staff writer Bobbi Booker
at (215) 893-5749
or bbooker@phillytrib.com.

