

Reflections of Time & Place

BY JULIA LAURIA-BLUM MAY 10, 2023



Ronny Quevedo, Pacha Cosmopolitanism Overtime at New York's LaGuardia Airport. (queensmuseum.org)

A Collaboration of Art at LaGuardia & Newark Liberty International Airports

Public art in airports; in addition to aesthetics, the value of having works of art that are freely accessible to the public is a social, cultural, and economic benefit for travelers, communities, and airport staff. In their traditionally harried and automated environments, airports enrich the travel experience by adding permanent public art to terminals worldwide, personalizing and vitalizing their built environments. Art installations offer a strong sense of time and place, identity, diversity, and a communal history unique to its cultured locale. The very presence of art at airport terminals also helps to create a more soothing and refreshing breathing-space for rushed or anxious travelers.

In the planning of public spaces, artists are the creatives who, through the creative process and their collaboration with architects, designers, administrators, engineers, funding agencies, and community stakeholders, bring their distinctive interpretation and aesthetic vision to civic space in an imaginative way that visually captures the essence of a culture's locale and its unique history. In addition, artists are advocates who, through their art, engage in social interaction and self-reflection and encourage awareness – creating art that, alongside its aesthetic components, educates, enlightens, and celebrates the culture and qualities of a place; these qualities differentiate one place from another.

With the multi-billion-dollar transformation of New York City's transportation infrastructure, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has worked vigorously to make public art a signature feature at the region's airports, striving to incorporate the culture and art of the local area. Heavily driven by Port Authority Executive Director, Rick Cotton and Chairman of the Board, Kevin O'Toole, incorporating public art through community engagement was an early goal for the major redevelopment program.

The largest, busiest redeveloped airports in the New York metropolitan region are no exception in the recent transformation of their immense atriums and corridors into vivid and luminous expressions of human imagination through the visual arts. At LaGuardia and Newark Liberty International Airport, the most recent public art installations serve as a hospitable greeting to travelers arriving through their gates, giving them a sample of what lies outside their bustling terminals. Art also extends a neighborly sense of community and an amiable farewell to passengers who are departing or connecting with a flight to their final destination,

Jim Heitmann, the Port Authority's Director of Aviation Redevelopment, recently discussed the significance of public art at area airports, saying, "I'm excited about the whole redevelopment program, especially about the artwork that the Port Authority has done by working with our partners and those we manage directly and I'm excited for it to have such a prominent role. It has been a key goal to involve the community in the way the art was procured and curated, in the way it was erected, and with the artists themselves, and it has been very successful."

LaGuardia Airport: Terminal C, in Partnership With the Queens Museum

In support of the Port Authority's vision to transform, renovate and upgrade the 'formerly aged' LaGuardia Airport, Delta Air Lines partnered with the Queens Museum to commission six renowned, New York-based artists to create large-scale, permanent art installations throughout Delta's sparkling new, multi-floored Terminal C Arrivals and Departures Hall which were unveiled at the opening of the terminal in June 2022.

The six artists selected for the commissions were Mariam Ghani, Rashid Johnson, Aliza Nisenbaum, Virginia Overton, Ronny Quevedo, and Fred Wilson. Curated by the Queens Museum, the permanent works include sculptures and painted ceramic murals that tell a compelling story about New York City's immigrant history, its people, and the importance of celebrating the metropolitan region's diversity. In addition, the work represents a unique collaboration between an airline, artists, a museum, and an airport. It serves to welcome travelers as they pass through Terminal C, elevating the travel experience through the visual arts.

Ronny Quevedo's, Pacha Cosmopolitanism Overtime incorporates the floors of gymnasiums that are painted in a way that draws a parallel between movement in sports activities and migration over local and international borders. The use of gold and silver leaf pays tribute to the role of light in his work and a sense of movement when viewed from different perspectives. The artist's commission is an homage to the diverse communities that call New York City home, honoring their resilience amid new and changing circumstances.