

ART AT THE AIRPORT AND THE INTERSECTION OF PUBLIC ART AND
PUBLIC HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the intersection of public art and public history in Philadelphia. This project looks at Philadelphia based case studies to see how the intersection of public art and public history can bring in new audiences, act as a form of advertisement, and shape interactive experiences for visitors. Connecting to a body of literature that deals with the power of place, I ask in this study how public history in unexpected places has the power to bring in new audiences that may not have the chance or even want to visit a traditional history museum or historic site. How do these projects and programs serve a community? The study features the history of Art at the Airport, an international series of art exhibits and programs at major airports. Among these, the Philadelphia International Airport's Art at the Airport program exhibits traditional and innovative art and regularly features historic content. Any airport today is a place of high stress, but surveys of airport visitors indicate that for some art has the ability to relieve anxieties. So what happens when public art and public history collide in this space? While studying Art at the Airport as an intern, I witnessed people who stopped, learned, and gained knowledge of history in a public setting without a book, a teacher, or tour guide. This study allows me to show the power of public history and public art.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My first day interning at Philadelphia International Airport's Art at the Airport was a day of meeting new people, learning the layout, seeing the exhibits, and being asked many of the same questions over and over again. Most of the conversations went like this: "Where do you go to school?" "What program are you in?" "You must love Tyler (the School of Art at Temple)." "Wait, you're a public history major. How did you get here?" The last question is the one that stuck with me the most. Nearly everyone assumed that I was a Master of Fine Arts student rather than a graduate student in history. I worked to make them understand that public history and public art do and can intersect in a variety of ways.

I am not alone in this quest it seems. Many people do not easily see the connection between the public sides of these disciplines. Melissa Rachleff, a professor of Arts Administration at New York University, in her 2011 chapter, "Peering Behind the Curtain: Artists and Questioning Historical Authority," argues that "academic and public historians may not grasp the significance of artists' projects to their field because far less analysis has been published from their perspective."¹ This study intends to address this issue and to analyze this body of literature and the Philadelphia projects that have

¹ Melissa Rachleff, "Peering Behind the Curtain: Artists and Questioning Historical Authority." *In Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, 2011), 208.

engaged in these kinds of projects with historians. Public history engages public art; public art serves public history. They can work together.

This study began at the Philadelphia International Airport (PHL). PHL's Art at the Airport program not only displays art in the six terminals, but the program also develops exhibits that draw on Philadelphia's rich history. When these exhibits work well, this program allows for hasty passengers to encounter Philadelphia history in an unexpected place. It engages audiences that might not regularly visit galleries and museums during their travel. Along the way such exhibits sometimes have the ability to stop travelers dead in their tracks as they ponder the display.

This project analyzes other recent Philadelphia work that seeks to combine the practices of public art and public history, toward creating a set of working principles for how to bring these practices together to produce good, art-inspired, public history work in unexpected places. Some smaller historical institutions have begun to use public art to grab the attention of audiences, and as a way of advertising their interpretive offerings, which is explored in chapter three.

I also analyze the history exhibits that have been part of the Philadelphia International Airport's Art at the Airport program. My analysis uncovers the important historical themes that were prominent in each exhibit and shows how such exhibits have changed over time -- from when the first history exhibit was displayed in 1999 to today. This analysis brings to light the importance that partnerships with museums can bring to the history exhibits as well how important the role of anniversaries are for the displaying of history exhibits.

Chapter two defines the rich history of public art and public history in Philadelphia. Chapter three explores case studies that show the importance of public art and public history working together. Chapter four gives us a brief history of Art at the Airport and outlines its importance as a model for historians thinking about crafting history exhibits outside a museum context. This chapter also analyzes the dataset of history exhibits show at Art at the Airport. Chapter five makes the argument that we need community, patience, and partnerships to support the work of history in unexpected places. Often a history organization might use art in the hopes that it will bring in new audiences. For example, staff at the Arch Street Meeting House, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter three, created a chalkboard signs that allowed passersby to interact on social issues, and to draw attention to the historical site behind the institution's sometimes off putting exterior brick walls.

While city boosters often argue that “culture can drive tourism, anchor redevelopment projects, enhance a city’s image, add to an amenity portfolio, catalyze innovative production and drive community development, and have done so by using the arts to jumpstart or stabilize economic growth,” this study also looks at how institutions do this work.² This study, in the end, shows us that when public art intersects with public history a city’s critical and vibrant core is exposed. And as we will see, it can also be used

² “Philadelphia Public Art: The Full Spectrum” a project by PennPraxis for the City of Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, funded by the William Penn Foundation (October 2009), 27.

http://planphilly.com/sites/planphilly.com/files/Report_v06.pdf

to connect residents to their past, their city's history, their neighborhood stories and immediate concerns, and to unite communities.

CHAPTER TWO

DEFINING PUBLIC ART AND PUBLIC HISTORY

Philadelphia is widely believed to have one of the largest public art collections in the country. Philadelphia's extraordinary collection of public art is a result of the city's long and impressive tradition of cultural and civic involvement – Penn Praxis³

What is public art and what is public history? Before this question can be answered, we must ask ourselves what is art and what is history? This is a bold question that has many different definitions, but for this thesis—Famous Spanish painter, Pablo Picasso stated, “We all know that Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth.”⁴ Art shows us something. History, however, talks about something. My definition of history is that it tells the story of something, some place, or some person from the past. Art critic and curator Lucy Lippard defines public art as “accessible art of any species that cares about, challenges, involves, and consults the audience for or with whom it is made, respecting community and environment.”⁵ But her definition is not as hard and fast as it might seem. Denise Meringolo, associate professor of history and Director of Public History at the University of Maryland, defines public history as:

³ “Public Art,” Visit Philadelphia, accessed January 23, 2017, <http://www.visitphilly.com/music-art/public-art/#sm.0001gah44lcr6f6wy6z20y2krme88>

⁴ Gardner, Howard, *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Reframed: Educating for the Virtues in the Age of Truthiness and Twitter*, (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 34.

⁵ Lippard, Lucy, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*, (New York: New Press, 1997), 264.

A form of public service. Public historians help create historical understanding by sharing authority and inquiry with a variety of partners: audiences, museum professionals, preservationists, business leaders and others. Public historians are trained, first and foremost, as historians –to conduct research, to craft interpretations and to write well. However, public historians must also be prepared to work collaboratively with partners for whom an understanding of history can have immediate practical implications. Public historians produce original interpretations that build bridges between scholarship and everyday life by respecting the ways in which their partners and audiences use history, and by balancing professional authority against community needs.⁶

A close look at how a wide range of curators, museum professionals, and historians have defined these categories over time allows us to see the origin of the changing landscape for the pairing of public art and public history.

PUBLIC ART

The Association for Public Art (founded in 1871) has defined public art as a “reflection of how we see the world – the artist’s response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are.”⁷ Penny Balkin Bach, in her book *Public Art in Philadelphia* (1992), sees public art as “a manifestation of how we see the world.”⁸

⁶ Denise Meringolo, “Introduction to Public History Syllabus,” The Accidental Academic, Accessed March 14, 2017, <http://denisemeringolo.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/08/Graduate-Introduction-to-Public-History.pdf>

⁷ “What is Public Art,” Association for Public Art, accessed December 2, 2016, <http://www.associationforpublicart.org/what-is-public-art/>

⁸ Penny Balkin Bach, *Public Art in Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 14.

Bach identifies public art as a concept starting in 1872, and in Philadelphia she identifies two sculptures: *Night* (1872) by Edward Stauch and *Hudson Bay Wolves* (1872) by Edward Kemeys as the city's first public art projects.⁹ For Bach, public art is unique in its ability to “express civil awareness, enhance the environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions.”¹⁰ Leah Douglas, Chief Curator of Art at the Airport at the Philadelphia International Airport, defines public art as “art that is accessible to the public without an entry fee and is located in non-gallery, non-museum institutions.”¹¹ Importantly, today, public art is not just bronze statue – or art done *for* the public. It is art done with the public, through community engagement, visual education, and lengthy conversations.

When did public art first begin in the United States? While public art in the form of memorials, commemorative sculpture, and public building decoration certainly existed in Philadelphia since its “first” architect William Strickland designed the Second Bank Building, many scholars see the beginning of modern public art as coming about in the 1930s with the initiation of New Deal programs set up by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt's New Deal created many projects, programs, and especially jobs for artists, who were paid to create art for all Americans. Among these, the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) was born at the end of 1933 and is most often cited as initiating public art as we see it today. The only guidance the

⁹ “APA's Expanded Timeline,” Association for Public Art, accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.associationforpublicart.org/timeline/expanded/#1880>

¹⁰ Bach, 14.

¹¹ Email correspondence with Leah Douglas on September 29, 2016.

government offered about subject matter was that the "American scene" would be a suitable topic.¹² The artists embraced that idea, turning out landscapes, cityscapes, and industrial scenes by the yard—the daily life of America. The PWAP only lasted a year until it was dissolved, due to lack of funding. The next few projects would be The Section set up by the Treasury Department and Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP).¹³ The most successful of the New Deal art project was the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which started in 1935 under Federal Project One. Several months later, a subdivision of the WPA called the Federal Art Project (FAP) was developed. The FAP was developed to help create artists' incomes but most importantly to fund patriotic art projects in an effort to rally the morale of disheartened American citizens. Most artists had to first apply for Home Relief to prove their impoverishment and then submit samples of their work to show that they were actively creating art. After being approved, they were given a stipend of twenty-four dollars a week.¹⁴ A few months later, the Federal Art Project employed more than 1100 artists. Unfortunately, when the U.S. became involved in World War II, the WPA and the FAP ended as well. Many, perhaps thousands of Works Progress Administration funded pieces are in private hands today despite being federal

¹² Steven M. Gelber, "Working to Prosperity: California's New Deal Murals." *California History* 58, no. 2 (1979): 101. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25157905>.

¹³ Andrew Hemingway, "Cultural Democracy by Default: The Politics of the New Deal Arts Programmes." *Oxford Art Journal* 30, no. 2 (2007): 271. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4500060>.

¹⁴ Cybelle Fox, "The WPA and the (Short-Lived) Triumph of Nativism." In *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State from the Progressive Era to the New Deal*, 236. Princeton University Press, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7sq50.13>.

property, and many have been lost or destroyed.¹⁵ However, the legacies of the PWAP, WPA, and FAP instilled in a generation of artists and to a generation of the public, a commitment to public art. This was the first time that the federal government helped artists to create murals, sculptures, prints, and paintings. However, it would not be the last time that the government supported the arts.

Philadelphia has always been at the forefront of public art in the United States. In 1872, Philadelphia neighbors Henry Fox and Charles Howell created the Fairmount Park Art Association.¹⁶ This was the first private non-profit organization created to integrate public art and urban planning.¹⁷ Today this organization is called the Association for Public Art (APA), and over the last one hundred and forty years, the APA has installed over a hundred pieces of sculpture, received numerous awards, and launched a project called *Museum Without Walls*.¹⁸ On its website, the APA poses the question, “Why Public Art?” The answer: “Public art is a part

¹⁵ Brian Naylor, “New Deal Treasure: Government Searches For Long-Lost Art,” All Things Considered, National Public Radio, NPR, April 16 2014. Web: <http://www.npr.org/2014/04/16/303718738/new-deal-treasure-government-searches-for-long-lost-art> . On lost art, see also Laurel Bliss and Melissa Lamont, “Documenting WPA Murals in California,” *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, vol.29, no. 1, Spring 2010, 9.

¹⁶ “Background: Historic Insights from an ‘Association of Firsts,’” Association for Public Art, Accessed December 2, 2016, <http://www.associationforpublicart.org/about/missionhistory/>

¹⁷ “About,” Association for Public Art, Accessed December 2, 2016 <http://www.associationforpublicart.org/about/>

¹⁸ Museum Without Walls™ launched in 2010. It is a multi-platform interactive and audio experience available by mobile app or web that allows for the audience to hear unique histories of the public art that is not typically expressed on outdoor signage

of our public history, part of our evolving culture and our collective memory. It reflects and reveals our society and adds meaning to our cities. As artists respond to our times, they reflect their inner vision to the outside world, and they create a chronicle of our public experience.”¹⁹ Making the connection between public history and public art, Association for Public Art is engaged in both.

On December 24, 1959, Philadelphia became the first city in the nation to have a Percent for Art Program.²⁰ The program started as a city agency, the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, in March of 1959 because its staff wanted developers to commission art as a part of the process for redeveloping Philadelphia’s blighted neighborhoods. The Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (PRA) was created in 1945 when the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania adopted the Urban Renewal Law. Today, the PRA continues its role as a key financier, project management, leader, and expert of developing and maintaining land in the City of Philadelphia.²¹ This program obligated “developers who are building on land that has been acquired and assembled by Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority to dedicate at least one percent of the total building construction costs toward the

¹⁹ “What is Public Art,” Association for Public Art, accessed December 2, 2016, <http://www.associationforpublicart.org/what-is-public-art/>

²⁰ Michael A. Nutter, Executive Order No. 08 - 14, October 29, 2014 <http://www.phila.gov/ExecutiveOrders/Executive%20Orders/EO%20814.pdf>

²¹ “History,” Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, Accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.philadelphiaredevelopmentauthority.org/about-us/history>

commissioning of original, site-specific works of art.”²² The Percent for Art Ordinance Philadelphia Code Section 16-103 states:

An amount not to exceed to exceed one percent of the total dollar amount of any Construction Contract for a building, bridge and its approaches, arch, gate or other structure or fixture to be paid for either wholly or in part by the City, shall be devoted to the Fine Arts; provided that said ornamentation is fitting and appropriate to the function and location of the structure.²³

The Percent for Art ordinance was created to enhance the aesthetic environment of Philadelphia. Today, the public art created by this program is ideally meant to be of the highest quality, create public dialogue, contribute to Philadelphia’s sense of identity, reflect community participation, provide access to the diversity of the arts, create true collaborations among artists, architects, engineers, and city officials, and encourage interactions and establish “vibrant and unique public spaces for the city and its residents.”²⁴ As of 2008, Philadelphia has nearly five thousand pieces of public art within the city limits.²⁵ There are many different types of public art beyond sculpture and

²² So far, no scholar has taken on the history of Philadelphia’s Percent for Art Program. “Percent for Art,” Philadelphia Development Authority, Accessed January 23, 2017, <https://www.philadelphiaredevelopmentauthority.org/percent-for-art>.

²³ “Percent for Art,” Philadelphia Development Authority, Accessed January 23, 2017, <https://www.philadelphiaredevelopmentauthority.org/percent-for-art>; <http://www.phila.gov/ExecutiveOrders/Executive%20Orders/EO%20814.pdf>, 1

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Philadelphia Public Art: The Full Spectrum” a project by PennPraxis for the City of Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, funded by the William Penn Foundation, 33. http://planphilly.com/sites/planphilly.com/files/Report_v06.pdf

murals. Counted among this tally is architecture, painting, stained glass, ceramics, mosaics, tapestry, exhibits, landscape art, and even live performance.

Public art incorporates beauty and curiosity into people's everyday lives. It can surprise people, comfort people, inspire discussion, and create memories. Public art has the ability to expose people to the world of art and can sometimes even be a person's only exposure to art in his or her lifetime. Such art is for everyone to see. It is free and accessible, but also engaging and even controversial at times, because it plays out in the public sphere. This is why public art is so important and why it can serve public history.

PUBLIC HISTORY

The New Deal was also key in establishing public history within the federal government. In 1934, Verne Chatelain, the first chief historian of the National Park Service, created what he called a "new kind of technician."²⁶ Chatelain's goal was to hire university trained historians to work for the National Park Service. He wanted these historians to become as "good on the ground as they were in the books."²⁷ The men he hired for the park service became the first federal public historians. Outside the federal government, by late 1970s, public history began to flourish with the creation of the first

²⁶ Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), xiii.

²⁷ Meringolo, xiv.

graduate program at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1976; the creation of a professional journal, *The Public Historian*, in 1978, and beginning of the National Council on Public History in 1980.²⁸ Nearly forty years later, there are now nearly one hundred and fifty graduate public history programs and fifty undergraduate public history programs not only in the United States but also in Canada, Australia, China, India, Germany, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, that seek to produce professionals engaged in doing history work with and in public.²⁹

Today, public history is more than just history for the public. Public history is a kind of scholarship which involves doing historical research, creating new knowledge, and engaging with the public; it is a public service; it is collaborative; and it is immediate. It is accessible to the public just like public art. In fact, some believe that public art is a segment of public history like oral history, monuments, museums, archives, park services, or preservation. However, public art can serve public history as a method. Clearly, one can tell by this history that Philadelphia has been at the forefront of the public art scene since the beginning, and many of the best public art projects have included history.

²⁸ Meringolo, xiv.

²⁹ “About the Field,” National Council on Public History, Accessed January 23, 2017, <http://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/>

CHAPTER THREE

CASE STUDIES

This chapter will not only dive into the history of Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program, but it will also look at case studies of small institutions that are using public art for audience outreach. Some of these case studies are included because I have first-hand experience with them, and others are powerful and critically successful projects that have taken place over the last five years. Among them, the Philadelphia Mural Arts program has the longest history, but more recent entries of interdisciplinary public art and public history include work by Arch Street Meeting House, Temple Contemporary, and the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks. These case studies show how public art and public history can work cohesively to create an interactive environment for the audience.

MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA



Figure 1: Phillip Adams, *Industrious Light*, 2015, Mural Arts Philadelphia, Photo Credit: Steve Weinik
<https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/industrious-light/industrious-light-main-belted-company/>

This mural shows uses the art to show the historical use of the building.

In 1984 the City of Philadelphia, under Mayor Wilson Goode, created the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network (PAGN). The goal of the PAGN became Goode's war against graffiti which he declared during his 1983 campaign. Goode believed that graffiti not only was detrimental to communities, but that it plagued the city by preventing economic development and causing low morale of the residents. PAGN launched as an "innovative comprehensive approach to curbing graffiti throughout Philadelphia." The network's duties included "crime and grime fighting, producing public art and

community beautification, and youth services and neighborhood organizing.”³⁰ The city increased law enforcement and made it illegal to sell spray paint to minors. The Juvenile Aid Division of the Philadelphia Police Department created an initiative to target and investigate the tags of major graffitists which resulted in the arrest and conviction of many offenders. The city also established an amnesty program that allowed arrested youths to be exempt from prosecution if they signed a pledge stating that they would not vandal again. Over one thousand youths signed the pledge between 1984 and 1991. By 1991, thirty-six of the former graffitists earned the status of full-time paid PAGN mural artists. PAGN allowed for a reduction in graffiti and trained young people in the beautification of neighborhoods.

By 1997, Philadelphia Mural Arts Advocates, a private non-profit, was incorporated to advise and support Mural Arts Philadelphia formerly known as PAGN. This allowed for Mural Arts to be transferred from Anti-Graffiti to the Department of Recreation in the municipal government. Today, Mural Arts Philadelphia’s mission is to “create art with others to transform places, individuals, communities and institutions” and through this to “empower artists to be change agents,” while stimulating “dialogue about critical issues.”³¹ Clearly, Mural Arts Philadelphia has come a long way from beautification and “vandals” to creating conversations about

³⁰ “Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network,” Government Innovators Network, accessed January 31, 2017, <https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/philadelphia-anti-graffitinetwork>

³¹ “Mission,” Mural Arts Philadelphia, Accessed February 1, 2017, <https://www.muralarts.org/about/mission/>

critical issues in the city. Not only is Mural Arts Philadelphia's mission important, but its process is key to the success of the program. Today, the organization, under the long-time direction of Jane Golden, has a 4-part process. First it finds the perfect community application for a mural, then they go to that community and listen and ask questions about what that community wants or needs, then from that conversation they make connections or partnerships with artists, community leaders, residents, and lastly, they celebrate the finished product.

MAP staff state that looking at the big picture is what is important by stating that they begin with a mural application, but they also look for the problems that Philadelphians face on a daily basis. The next step is listening to the community. They see listening as a part of the change in understanding and learning. Administrators at MAP ask the community questions and create a dialogue. Their goal is to make sure that those in the city who have been silenced will be amplified by their process and the resulting art. Connections and partnerships begin when artists, participants, residents, nonprofit leaders, funders, policymakers, and those who want change come together to create and inspire. MAP states, "we connect people and institutions who normally do not talk to each other, and build bridges of dialogue over longstanding chasms of misunderstanding, distrust, or ignorance. The connections are not always comfortable or convenient. But they result in important conversations that spark change – in attitudes, in understanding, and in hearts and minds."³² Lastly, the organization celebrates the journey and each other as well the

³² "Our Process," Mural Arts Philadelphia, Accessed February 1, 2017, <https://www.muralarts.org/about/our-process/>

accomplishments of all involved. While the art is the most visible part of the long process, the collaboration allows for change, beautification, optimism, and reflection. Then the process starts all over again with a new application for a mural. Timothy Drescher, who wrote the foreword for *Philadelphia Murals and the Stories They Tell*, states, “Philadelphia’s murals express community, but they also help create it-all over town.”³³

MAP is partially funded by the city with about thirty-five percent of its funds coming from Philadelphia's Percent for Art Program, while the other funding comes from foundations, corporations, and individuals. This hybrid model allows for a balance of public and private that supports artists as well as the city.³⁴ Today, the program has produced more than 3,600 murals and has also recently created a map so that audiences can do walking tours of the murals. Of these murals, many touch on Philadelphia’s rich history. For example, “Industrious Light: Main Belting Company” (2015) explores “the churn of history in South Philadelphia” at a site where machine belts were made to feed all forms of industrial work in the city and beyond.³⁵ Murals also explore the biographies

³³ Jane Golden, Robin Rice, and Monica Yant Kinney, *Philadelphia Murals and the Stories They Tell* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002), 8.

³⁴ Jamie Rojo and Steven Harrington, “Philadelphia Mural Arts, A Golden Age,” *The Huffington Post*, September 25, 2014, Accessed February 1, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jaime-rojo-steven-harrington/philadelphia-mural-artsprogram_b_5879442.html

³⁵ For a brief description of the mural and what artist Phillip Adams calls “exposing the hidden gems of history” in Philadelphia see <https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/industrious-light/industrious-light-main-beltingcompany/> Accessed March 22, 2017.

of important Philadelphians, like the 2016 mural featuring a prominent portrait of Richard Allen entitled, “The Legacy of Bishop Richard Allen and the A.M.E. Church.” The mural by Willis Humphrey celebrated the bicentennial of the Philadelphia A.M.E. church.³⁶ Another recent project from 2015, the “Norris Homes Historical Marker” both celebrates and mourns the city’s redevelopment history and Temple University’s current expansion.³⁷ While public history is not always a method that MAP uses in its projects, it is clear that such projects not only connect to their changing communities, but they also recognize the historic landscape, context, and work that communities need to have to engage.

³⁶ For an explanation about the history of the mural see <https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/legacy-bishop-richard-allen-m-e-church/> Accessed March 22, 2017.

³⁷ To learn more about Jennie Shanker’s mural see <https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/open-source/familias-separadas/> Accessed March 22, 2017.

ARCH STREET MEETING HOUSE



Figure 2: Photograph of Public Art located at Arch Street Meeting House, June 17, 2016, Photo Credit: Lynne Calamia

The Arch Street Meeting House was erected between 1803 and 1811 by Owen Biddle Jr. Since that date, Arch Street has been an important site in the history of social change of the United States, from the congregation's early involvement in abolitionism to suffragism and environmental activism. Today the primary problem that Arch Street faces is that most Philadelphians and tourists alike do not know it is there. Those that notice it may be afraid to enter its grounds because it is still used as an active meeting house. Another issue that Arch Street confronts is that it is surrounded by a massive brick wall that makes many believe that they should not enter. These three issues helped Lynne Calamia, Director of Arch Street Meeting House since 2013, find inspiration in

artist Candy Chang’s “Before I die…” New Orleans participatory public art project. In 2011, Chang covered the side of a dilapidated building with chalkboard paint and stenciled the phrase, “Before I die I want to…” at the top. She left space as well as chalk for community members to fill in the blank. Since then, more than one thousand “Before I die” walls were recreated in thirty-five languages and in more than seventy countries.³⁸ On Chang’s website, she indicates that she wanted this experiment to be recreated, and she carefully lists the materials anyone will need to make the project happen. When Calamia saw Change’s project, she immediately saw a way to make Arch Street Meeting House’s brick walls seem less intimidating. After Calamia wrote a post on Facebook about this idea, I contacted her to help out and to get a look at a public history and public art project at work in Philadelphia.

We began brainstorming in June 2016 to decide if we wanted to follow Chang’s “Before I die I want to …” deliberately. We thought the focus on death might have had some resonance since just inside the Meeting House’s walls is a historic burial ground. Instead, Calamia wanted to embrace the institution’s social change legacy and ask: “How will you change the world?” The chalkboard wall would not only allow for a passerby to interact with art, but that art could also help connect to and interpret the history of the meeting house. She decided that we would make two large signs that would serve as the “walls,” because Arch Street’s walls are constructed of historic bricks, painting them black was out of the question. Each side of the main entrance of

³⁸ “Before I die,” Candy Chang, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://candychang.com/work/before-i-die-in-nola/>

Arch Street would have its own blackboard sign. This allowed for visitors to see the entrance, and become aware that they could come through the walls and into the meeting house to receive a tour, do a self-guided walk around, or learn about the history of the Friends. In an interview about the project, Calamia recalled: “I think about what people get when they walk in the front door. This is an unfamiliar religious building and we don’t want people to feel weird.”³⁹

The process for making the large chalkboard signs was not an easy task. Calamia and a staff member were able to paint the boards. We were able to get some help from the maintenance staff who made sure the boards were stable enough to stand against the wall without tipping over and injuring anyone. Once the signs’ stability was ensured, we stenciled: “How will you change the world?” and “I will...” onto the front. By the time the first sign was in place, we already had people stopping to ask questions, gaze at the wall, and ready to write about how they would change the world. We could not get chalk fast enough. The signs went up not long after the June 12, 2016 mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando Florida, when forty-nine people were killed. The first participant wrote “Assault rifle ban.” In this way the project not only welcomed participants to a historic site and the history of Quaker activism, but also allowed people to cope with and discuss the struggles they face every day.

Such projects are never perfect; the walls had to be monitored for profanity and any other controversial comments. However, the goal of the chalkboard wall was not to

³⁹ Grace Shallow, “Student Teaching History Public Art,” The Temple News, August 30, 2016, <http://temple-news.com/lifestyle/student-teaching-history-public-art/>

be perfect, but to welcome new audience members “beyond the wall,” and to let them know a bit about the history of Quakers in Philadelphia. Calamia tried to track encounters with the wall, by placing a hashtag on the board. The hashtag has been used nearly fifty times on Instagram, though such metrics likely track very few of the total interactions. The project was funded as a small part of a larger sixty-thousand-dollar grant awarded by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage in 2015 to experiment with methods to engage new audiences.

This type of public art allowed for a place for communication, outcry, support, and empowerment—all important elements in Quaker lives today and in the past. Writing on the wall made people think how they could make change. This case study shows how using public art, especially in an “unexpected place,” to connect with a public audience can bring real benefits to small institutions interested in bringing in new audiences.

FUNERAL FOR A HOME – TEMPLE CONTEMPORARY GALLERY, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY



Figure 3: 3711 Melon Street-Mantua, Courtesy of Temple Contemporary, Photo Credit: Jeffery Stockbridge
http://www.pcah.us/news/92_temple_contemporary_s_funeral_for_a_home_in_the_news

Funeral for A Home house before the memorial service on May 31, 2014.

Temple Contemporary's *Funeral for a Home* was an ambitious public art/public history initiative. The project oversaw the demolition of a vacant Philadelphia row house, and it held a public ceremony commemorating the home's history and the families who once lived in the home. Patrick Grossi, project manager, later reflected in *The Public Historian* that:

By willingly inserting public memory and historic preservation into its programming agenda, however, *Funeral for a Home* became something much different: a meditation on Philadelphia's vacant houses, a testament to African American resilience and late-twentieth-century civic activism, and of perhaps

most interest to readers of this journal, a model for collaborative programming that worked across multiple geographies, disciplines, and modes of interpretation.⁴⁰

Initially, Grossi was met with conflict when starting this project, as artists found it to be primarily a history project. While the historians he encountered believed it was an art project. The fact that the project made use of both the practices and methods of history and art brought a dissonance to some of the participating practitioners. Eventually *Funeral for a Home* demonstrated how public historians, artists, and residents all working together could come to create an understanding of a shared past and allow for community engagement around a complicated immediately relevant issue in Philadelphia – the demolition of whole neighborhoods of homes. For Grossi, the project became “a transparent work of preservation activism,” and it “revealed ways in which the built environment can serve as an open-air classroom, a site of inquiry as much a work of engineering, artistry, and speculative capital.”⁴¹

Funeral for a Home was no easy task, it took months to locate the perfect “home” for a demolition and funeral. Project staff finally located a home in Mantua, a West Philadelphia neighborhood bordered by the Schuylkill River and Fairmount Park. The row house they settled on at 3711 Melon Street was built around 1872 during the housing boom. A home in this area was important because it showed the evolution of the neighborhood which allowed for the “history [to] not just a trip down memory lane, but

⁴⁰ Grossi, Patrick, “Plan or Be Planned for,” *The Public Historian* 37, (2) May 2015, 15.

⁴¹ Grossi, 16.

rather a tool of diplomacy and civic engagement, and by project's end, a tool of empowerment as well."⁴² However, the idea that young white artists and historians wanted to come into a predominantly African-American neighborhood where real funerals and demolitions had been ever present phenomena might have sounded like a recipe for an insensitive spectacle rather than a true community event. However, because the community did become involved, and in fact ran the events on the day of the funeral, the project worked. The team partnered with Fred Stokes, a community member, and earned his trust and support by completing careful historical research about the house and its residents, and by coming to understand how the block had changed over time.

On May 31, 2014 the house at 3711 Melon Street was demolished after a memorial service. Nearly four hundred mourners gathered that day to commemorate a home and bear witness to its demolition. Flowers were placed along the roofline of the house, and the dumpster that would carry the house's "remains" was retrofitted to look like a coffin. But before the destruction, speakers, who included family members of the last resident, neighbors, a city council woman, a choir from the nearby Mount Olive Baptist Church, and Steven and Billy Dufala, reflected upon the life of the house, its residents, and change over time in the neighborhood.⁴³ They told stories of reflection,

⁴² Grossi, 19.

⁴³ For more on the reception and coverage of the project, see Peter Crimmins, "In Nod To History, A Crumbling Philly Row House Gets A Funeral" NPR, last modified May 30, 2014, accessed March 14, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2014/05/30/317407504/in-nod-tohistory-a-crumbling-philly-row-house-gets-a-funeral> ; Jeff Gammage, "A Community Talks about Fixing Itself," Philadelphia Inquirer, May 29, 2014; Kate Kilpatrick, "From Criminal Records to Clean Slate in Philly's Promise Zone," Aljazeera America, November 17, 2014;

remembrance, strength, and resilience. This allowed for a day of joy as Mantuans as well as others came together to celebrate their history.

But what happened afterwards? The house might be rebuilt but it will not be the same. It makes one question about what has happened in the wake of other demolitions. What happens to these homes' histories? What of the family memories that are gone when the house no longer stands? What type of legacy does that leave behind for communities? Grossi has resolved that "it has become my hope through this project that those houses still standing receive the opportunity to remain, that their inhabitants find a voice in a narrative often fixated on Philadelphia's colonial past, and that those houses and structures that must come down receive a proper burial in the service of their neighbors, whatever form that may take."⁴⁴

When reflecting on the outcome of the project and the oral histories he collected as part of it Grossi notes that "in essence, art made the history sing, and sing it did."⁴⁵ Many elements of this project that made it successful, including: 1) it was community oriented; 2) it was immediate because old, dilapidated houses are in danger of demolition all the time in Philadelphia, and 3) it was collaborative because it involves public historians, artists, a university partner, a construction team, and community members. The project also included original historical research, including the detailed history of the

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/11/17/promise-zonecriminalrecordexpungementclinic.html> ; Accessed March 22, 2017.

⁴⁴ Grossi, 25.

⁴⁵ Grossi, 22.

structure and its residents, analysis of the demographics of the surrounding area (all of these largely gathered from census and insurance data), and work in the area archives, and oral history collection. *Funeral* not only was successful because it brought in an audience, but also because it generated new, and increasingly relevant, research. This type of project had not been done before, and they were able to connect the larger scholarship on demolition and city divestment in struggling neighborhoods in a way that made sense not only for the residents but for artists as well.

Funeral for a Home was an ambitious idea that brought public art and public history together. However, like most art and history public projects, it was not necessarily a project that extended into something more. While we may all hope there are not more demolitions of such historic homes, Philadelphia remains a city with a very high demolition rate and questionable preservation success in recent years.

POWEL HOUSE – THE PHILADELPHIA SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LANDMARKS



Figure 4: *Shadow House* Cast, L to r: Michael A. Lienhard, Kayla Grasser, and Anthony Crosby. Photo Credit: R.A. Friedman, <http://fringearts.com/event/shadow-house/>

Members of the cast of *Shadow House*.

When thinking about public history, opera might not usually come to mind. But the connection between public history and the musical arts will not be unfamiliar to fans of *Hamilton*. In 2016, the Powel House, one four house museums owned and operated by the nonprofit the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks (Landmarks), with a partnership with the Philadelphia Opera Collective made that possible.⁴⁶ Mickey Herr, the Communications and Development Director for Landmarks, wanted to expand

⁴⁶ The Philadelphia Opera Collective mission articulates that “opera is an intense and honest expression of human emotions. We are dedicated to providing audiences with unique, visceral operatic experiences while working closely with artists in the theatre community of Philadelphia. We hope to use our productions to put an end to stereotypes that opera is simply empty spectacle by crafting an environment where opera becomes accessible to those not familiar with the art form.” <http://phillyoperacollective.com/about/>

the interpretative narratives of the Powel House, which had traditionally only interpreted the lives of Samuel and Elizabeth William Powel and their circle of friends between 1769 and 1830, to attract new audiences, and give the visitor an interactive experience.⁴⁷ With the project, Herr and other staff, wanted to pose a series of questions that would challenge the house museum's long-standing interpretation.

Their current narrative focuses on basically twenty years of the entire 250-year history of the building (approximately 1769-1793). What happens when we consider the occupants of the house in 1810 (William Rawle & family), 1850 (Isaiah Hacker & family), or 1910 (Wolf Klebanksy's warehouse)? What happens when we look at the surrounding neighborhood in those same time periods? Or the prevailing attitudes on historic preservation in 1930 versus 1960 versus present day? Do we need physical objects to tell these stories? And HOW do we present these topics to NEW, younger audiences, in a way that will capture their attention? If our mission is to "...inspire people to learn about history and engage with their community..." how does this happen when our audiences are rapidly changing and are not much interested in traditional house tours?⁴⁸ Herr collaborated with Brenna Geffers, a Philadelphia theatre artist who works with Fringe Arts. Fringe Arts was established in 1997 as the Philadelphia Fringe Festival

⁴⁷ In fall 2015, my class (Managing Public History) partnered with the Powel House to create self-guided tours. The Powel's were Philadelphia elite in the late 1700s. Samuel Powel was the colonial and post-colonial Mayor of Philadelphia.

⁴⁸ Mickey Herr, "Final Report Shadow House Fringe Production," September 27, 2016, 1. Email Correspondence

with the goal of providing opportunities for contemporary performing artists to connect with audiences in an exciting social environment.⁴⁹ Together over the course of a year, Herr and Geffers set up a plan for *Shadow House*. The production became a fully immersive opera and theatrical experience. Between September 8 and September 22, 2016, the Powel House hosted four hundred and forty-one paid and guest attendees to the ten public and two private performances of *Shadow House*. Six of the ten public shows sold out and the others were only a few shy of selling out.

The *Shadow House* follows the story of eleven people whose lives span over the two-hundred-year history of the Powel House. Some of the characters are historical people who lived in or worked at the Powel House over the years like Wolf Klebansky, Frances Wister, and Edith Standen. Other characters were 2016 versions of historical characters. For instance, Eliza Powel was an adapted from her eighteenth-century self to a 2016 version of her historical person. The audience who came to the production found characters caught in overlapping moments causing the past, present, and future to merge. The sometimes dark and funny opera was enthralling and received overwhelming positive reviews.⁵⁰ Deb Miller reviewing the play for *DC Metro Theater Arts* stated “While

⁴⁹ “FringeArts is Philadelphia’s home for contemporary performance, presenting progressive, world-class art that stretches the imagination and boldly defies expectation. As the city’s lead experimenter in the arts, FringeArts exposes audiences to unpredictable dance, theater and music performances by accomplished and emerging innovators who are pushing the boundaries of art-making and redefining the artistic landscape worldwide.” Their mission states, “FringeArts presents world-class, contemporary performing arts that challenge convention and inspire new ways of thinking.” <http://fringearts.com/about/what-we-do/>

⁵⁰ I volunteered at *Shadow House* twice (September 12th and September 19th) so this is based from personal experience.

Shadow House gives new life to people and memories from the past, it will also live on as a part of the rich ongoing history of the Powel House. It will make you reflect on the mysteries of life, death, space, and time, the universal issues we all face across the centuries, and the impact our present actions will have on posterity.”⁵¹ During the performance, audience members were able to follow individual characters to see where their stories led or stay in one room to see what stories filed through that room. This allowed audience members to enter rooms that are usually roped off to public. The Philadelphia Opera Collective’s website for the *Shadow House* explained the production’s plot and action this way:

The audience may follow a woman to the third floor as she tries to escape her guilt over the loss of millions of lives. They may toast gin at a Garden Party where a socialite is trying to bring European culture back to a post- Civil War country. They may interrupt two lovers meeting in the resplendent ballroom for the last time. They can hide with a poor soldier as he breaks into the dining room to enjoy one night of luxury in his life. The stories unfold simultaneously over the grounds and three floors of the restored mansion.⁵²

This interplay between past and present allowed for an engaging and interactive experience for those who visited. Reviewers raved about *Shadow House*, but preservationists might have some concerns. For one, what about conservation issues

⁵¹ Deb Miller, “2016 Philadelphia Fringe Festival Review: ‘Shadow House’ at Philadelphia Opera Collective and PhilaLandmarks,” DC Metro Theater Arts, September 13, 2016, Accessed March 14, 2017. <http://dcmetrotheaterarts.com/2016/09/13/2016philadelphia-fringe-festival-review-shadow-house-philadelphia-opera-collectivephilalandmarks/>

⁵² “Shadow House: Opera at the Powel House,” Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, Accessed February 8, 2017, <https://www.philalandmarks.org/shadowhouse-opera-at-powel-house>

within the house? Beer and wine mixed with eleven cast members and twenty to thirty or so audience members could cause major problems. How should staff account for the actions of all the people in the house, as they roam from room to room? What of the security issues for the Powel House's collections of historic objects? Luckily, it seems that none of these issues came up during the production.

Another broad concern for such projects is always: how to fund for such innovative programs? *Shadow House* was as groundbreaking event for the site, and some may not have felt that the opera was appropriate for the Powel House. The hope for a project like this is that it would be so successful that it would allow similarly cutting edge programming to happen again at the Powel House. Herr reports that this project took nearly two years with the planning, production, funding, and creating the right relationships, which represents an enormous amount of time for one person from Landmarks. By the end of its run, the *Shadow House*, raised eleven thousand dollars, but that was just enough to pay the performers, composers, production staff, and provide catering. It did not cover the time that staff had devoted to it. This means that more people on the board must be willing to participate with this type of project in order to raise money because if they did then Landmarks would have easily made money.⁵³

Over the years Landmarks has used public art for fundraising. Perhaps the organization's first time was in the 1930s, when women on the board wanted to restore

⁵³ Mickey Herr, "Final Report Shadow House Fringe Production," September 27, 2016, 3. Email Correspondence. Herr states: "Ultimately we raised over \$11K to fund this production (at about breakeven)."

the Powel House, they held exhibits called “Needlework of Today” and “Needlework of Yesterday and Tomorrow.” These exhibits raised enough money to install the house’s furnace and restore the dining room, the second floor back bedroom, and much of the woodwork that had been relocated to Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.⁵⁴ It seems that Landmarks has long used art as a way to connect with new audiences and to keep the Powel House as thriving as it was when George Washington danced there. Historical sites, and perhaps especially historic house museums, are places where public art can bring in new audiences or allow for a new interpretation.

Each of these case studies show ways that historical and artistic methods can be used together to create meaningful art and history. Whether it is public murals that help us recall Philadelphia’s past, temporary art projects that help us understand that Quaker history is right around the corner, performance pieces that bring together preservation issues and community needs for a much needed conversation about loss, or operas that excited new audiences about old homes and their stories, when these methods come together in Philadelphia we can see both the past and art in new ways. These case studies show that place and history can matter a great deal for a public art piece to be successful, but what about when such projects take place in unexpected places? The next chapters will look at place as well as the importance of history and art in unexpected place.

⁵⁴ “First Ladies show Needlework Here: Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Hoover Contributors to Phila. Exhibit” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 27, 1935

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORY IN PLANE SIGHT

San Francisco International Airport started the first Art at the Airport program (AAA). Its public art program began in 1977, created by the San Francisco Arts Commission with the construction of the Airport's third terminal. However, it was not until 1980 that the San Francisco Airport Commission along with the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco created their first joint exhibition program at the San Francisco International Airport (SFO). After one successful year, a new department was created at the airport to produce exhibitions that would display the diversity of cultural life in San Francisco, but also humanize the airport. SFO Museum, as it would become to be called, became the first museum in an airport to gain accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums. The SFO now has a collection of eighty pieces of art in a variety of styles by many different artists from around the world.⁵⁵ Today its mission is "to provide a broad range of exhibitions and educational programs, collectively represent the diversity of human achievement, enrich the public experience, and differentiate SFO from other airports."⁵⁶ It has set an example for all other airport art programs, showing what it means to have a successful program. Other successful Art at the Airport programs include

⁵⁵ "Public Art," SFO Museum, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.flysfo.com/museum/public-art>.

⁵⁶ "Mission and History," SFO Museum, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.flysfo.com/museum/about/mission-statement>

ones at the Miami International Airport, Nashville International Airport, San Diego International Airport, Denver International Airport, Albany International Airport, Albuquerque International Airport, and of course, Philadelphia International Airport⁵⁷.

Art at the Airport has also become an international trend. In 2006, the Edinburgh Airport opened up The Airport Gallery: Scottish Contemporary Art which was the first of its kind in a United Kingdom airport. The program focuses on local talent and all artists included in exhibitions must have a Scottish connection. Its goal is to help Scottish art meet the world.⁵⁸ One of the newest international airport art programs is Espace Musées which is located at the Charles de Gaulle Airport in Roissy just outside of Paris. The program opened in December of 2012, and the program partners with museums from across France for six month periods. Catherine Chevillot the director of the Musée Rodin, the first to partner with the program, notes that for her museum it was “six months of free advertising...[and] an audience that is leaving but that often comes back.” She estimated that while 730,000 people visit the museum every year, approximately 750,000 to 800,000 people came through the airport gallery every six months taking in its featured exhibit. The program was established hoping both to improve the airport’s image

⁵⁷ As of yet, no formal history of the development of art programs in airports has been written by art historians or historians. Much of what I have pieced together here comes from these programs’ published histories or newspaper articles that have covered their programs and exhibitions. These programs often go by the name Art at the Airport or Art in the Airport.

⁵⁸ “About Us,” The Airport Gallery Scottish Contemporary Art, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.theairportgallery.com/about-us/>

and to help it gain a competitive edge over other European airports.⁵⁹ There are many other Art at the Airport programs that have followed the trend that SFO started almost forty years ago. Not only does Art at the Airport allow passengers to pass their time pleasantly, but it also gives them a chance to learn about the local culture.

The Art at the Airport program at the Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) began in 1998. Leah Douglas is the founding chief curator. It began with a few exhibits, and without the ambitious schedule that many programs have today. Today it hosts over thirty rotating and permanent exhibits. Since 1998, Philadelphia's AAA has shown more than three-hundred exhibits, which millions of passengers have had the pleasure of viewing. Their primary purpose is "to humanize the airport environment, provide visibility for Philadelphia's unique cultural life, and to enrich the experience of the traveling public."⁶⁰ The program's rotate exhibits every six months which allows for passengers to see a variety of different exhibits even if they always travel in and out of the same gate. PHL's AAA is also home to several permanent collections commissioned by the Percent or Art Program of the Office of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Aurelien Breeden, "Tired of the Duty-Free Shop? Go Check Out Those Rodins," *New York Times*, February 12, 2013, accessed October 5, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/13/world/europe/roissy-charles-de-gaulle-airportopens-art-gallery.html?_r=1

⁶⁰ Natasha Geiling, "Stuck at the Airport? Why Not Take in an Art Exhibit," *Smithsonian.com*, November 25, 2014, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/stuck-airport-why-not-take-art-exhibit180953432/?no-ist>.

⁶¹ "Art & Exhibitions Locations," AAA Brochure: Philadelphia International Airport, Accessed April 14, 2017, <https://www.phl.org/Arts/Pages/AboutArt.aspx>

Leah Douglas has asserted that “continually changing” exhibits at the airport “presents a wide variety of art both in medium and subject matter that will appeal to a diverse public around the world.”⁶² Any art in an airport program automatically encounters audiences from a broad spectrum. In Philadelphia, men and women between flights might not have time to visit the city’s museums and galleries, but they get a glimpse of the artwork that one could see in a museum or gallery. Picking up on this, one passenger from Stone Mountain, Georgia on December 29, 2008 noted in a comment card that such exhibits bring “art to many people,” who may not be “inclined to visit art galleries and museums,” or who “have not been exposed to art and the appreciation of art.”⁶³ Likewise Douglas also maintains that “it’s often difficult to set aside time to visit galleries and museums,” but “it’s also wonderful to have artwork presented in the public realm.”⁶⁴

Presenting art, and even occasionally history, in airport settings helps airports counter the reality that they are anxiety-filled, high security, and high stress places. Art at the Airport, according to Douglas allows for the passengers to not only pass time while at the airport but to have an educational and thoughtful experience. She believes art makes the passengers feel welcome, and sometimes it even takes away travel blues. In addition, “from the artist’s point of view, it is a great opportunity to have such a large

⁶² Leah Douglas, “General Information about the Exhibitions Program at PHL” 2016

⁶³ Audience Survey: 12-29-2008 Stone Mountain, GA #1220 ID#1915

⁶⁴ Douglas, “General Information”

audience see their work and possibly buy it.”⁶⁵ However, Douglas offers that at least in Philadelphia, Art at the Airport is able to be so successful because it draws upon a deep pool of artists throughout the Philadelphia region.

Not only does Art at the Airport draw from artists, but it also draws from the well-established history of the region. For instance, in the summer of 2016, corresponding with the 2016 presidential election season and the city’s role as host to the Democratic National Convention, Art at the Airport mounted an exhibit called *Philadelphia’s Presidential Convention History, 1848-2016*. This exhibit enlightened viewers on the twelve political party conventions held in Philadelphia over the past one hundred and fifty years. Douglas partnered with Alfio J. Brindisi, a Philadelphian who has been collecting American political memorabilia for 50 years. His collection, described as a “museum of political artifacts,” includes over 15,000 items from political pins to cigars, hats, masks, pennants, plates, posters, teapots, toys, even toilet paper rolls featuring images of individual candidates.⁶⁶ The exhibit made use of material culture: political pins, campaign posters, and historical photographs to tell the story of each convention.

Ilona Szekely, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art Education at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Kentucky, in “Art at the Airport: An Exploration of New Art Worlds” agrees that it is important to be able to look around the

⁶⁵ Ibid. The artist’s website or information is displayed with their exhibits so that maybe a passenger may reach out to the artist to buy their work.

⁶⁶ “Political Pins: Collection of Alfio J. Brindisi” Philadelphia International Airport, Accessed April 14, 2017, <http://www.phl.org/Arts/Pages/Archivedexhibitions/AlfioBrindisi.aspx>

airport and see artwork when traveling. She calls it a “rewarding experience.”⁶⁷ Szekely, like Douglas, sees such exhibitions as a way to educate the public, but also as a way to promote community. Szekely writes, “for the art classroom, the airport can be an excellent lesson in site specific art.”⁶⁸ She argues for young students-it can be present a fast-paced vision as they look at and learn about art in their community. Szekely notes that the new generation has become used to a fast-paced lifestyle, in part because of modern technology. As a result, she believes that the airport is actually better a better suited environment for children to learn about art than a museum. At many museums children are often told to keep quiet and not touch anything or run around. In fact, the Philadelphia International Airport has its own a space for children to run around and play called *Ready for Takeoff*. The space is located in Terminal A-East and is cosponsored by the Please Touch Museum, a children’s museum that was founded in 1976.⁶⁹

Szekely believes that those who travel to museums are likely to be different than those who travel in airports. Travelers do not have to engage in established conversations about art; they do not have to understand it; all they have to do is enjoy it. Szekely and Philadelphia curator, Leah Douglas both believe that Art at the Airport is a way to share

⁶⁷ Szekely, Iona. "Art at the Airport: An Exploration of New Art Worlds." *Art Education* 65, no. 4 (07, 2012): <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.temple.edu/docview/1023805614?accountid=14270>, 33.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “About PTM,” Please Touch Museum, Accessed April 14, 2017, <http://www.pleasetouchmuseum.org/about/about-ptm/>

art with those who may not be comfortable going into art museums. It also creates a safe space for artists to show their work to millions of people. A passenger at PHL wrote: “The historic problem of "art" is getting busy people to observe it. The problem of all museums is that it is always the same "customers.”⁷⁰ So it is just a matter of designing the exhibits to draw a certain number of "new" customers.” How does this relate to Art at the Airport? This passenger from Boston, Massachusetts agrees with Szekely and Douglas because both believe that airport artwork allows for a broader art audience, and one that is not just the usual museum-goer.

In 2002, while many Americans and airports were still dealing with changes in travel that came in the wake of 9/11, the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) began to organize workshops about art in the airport. Greg Mamary, AAAE’s Head of Special Projects, acknowledged that “once 9/11 happened, airports were desperate to make the experience calmer and more enjoyable for passengers.”⁷¹ One passenger at Philadelphia International Airport, just two months after 9/11, wrote in a visitor survey, that “with all the added security and concerns about terrorism, the arts exhibits offer relief and diversion and pleasure.”⁷² After 9/11 the AAAE began to see art

⁷⁰ Audience Survey: 11-21-2004 Boston, Mass #279 ID#962, Art at the Airport Database, accessed July 22, 2016, Philadelphia, PA.

⁷¹ Scott McCartney, “Airports for Art Lovers,” The Wall Street Journal, September 18, 2013, accessed October 15, 2016.

⁷² Audience Survey: 11-7-2001 Jenkintown, PA #591 ID#1280, Art at the Airport Database, accessed July 22, 2016, Philadelphia, PA.

in the airport as fulfilling a need for this “relief.”⁷³ It turned out that many U.S. airports already had in place a very successful program, that could be scaled up for other airports with AAAE support.

While Philadelphia’s Art at the Airport is seen by many passengers and by airport executives and curators as an unmitigated success, it is not without challenges. Most programs, museums, and exhibits show a deliberate inclination to avoid controversy. In fact, one of Douglas’s limitations, especially given the family audiences in airports, is that artwork not be controversial as in nothing sexual, bias, racist, or violent. Instead, it should be colorful and educational, but it should not cause any commotion. However, even with this mandate, some exhibits are seen as challenging. The recent presidential convention exhibit was controversial to some because some passengers did not realize that it only covered conventions that had been held in Philadelphia. Many people also stopped and asked where Donald Trump’s campaign memorabilia was or where items about President Obama’s campaign were. This is just one relevant problem that the program faces when trying to do an educational or historical exhibit. The passengers have to be willing to read the exhibit labels, but often they are in a rush. Such political exhibits might leave a bad taste in their mouth during a heated election season, and this could reflect badly on PHL or AAA. But, Douglas has not been deterred from history oriented exhibits. Other current or recent history oriented exhibits include: *Philadelphia's 100 History Makers of the 20th Century* in Partnership with the African American Museum in

⁷³ Ibid.

Philadelphia, *Public Art Philadelphia, 9 to 5: Vintage Office Equipment, About Philadelphia: A City of Firsts, and Civil Rights in Philadelphia*.⁷⁴

One of the limitations that Art at the Airport faces today also came about because of increased security measures in the wake of 9/11. Since 9/11, Art at the Airport is not really open to all public audiences, just to those who work at the airport or those who can afford a high-priced airline ticket. To solve this issue, some airports including Philadelphia International Airport have started to open exhibitions in baggage claims areas which are open to all. Jacksonville International Airport holds exhibits at the security gate so that even those who do not have tickets can still see some artwork.⁷⁵

How might ideas from Art at the Airport work for public historians? The most essential element of Art at the Airport is that the site itself allows for access to a huge audience. Nearly all of the popular journalism pieces that have covered various Art at the Airport projects point to the benefit to artists that comes with mass exposure to the exhibits and collections.⁷⁶

What if critical historical exhibitions were held in airports? Might this allow audiences to learn about important local historical events and figures and possibly inspire

⁷⁴ For more information on Philadelphia's Art at the Airport exhibits, see the program's website which archives past exhibits: <https://www.phl.org/Arts/Pages/Archived-ArtExhibitions.aspx> Accessed March 22, 2017.

⁷⁵ "Fine Art and Culture Exhibitions," Jacksonville International Airport Art Commission, Accessed April 14, 2017, <http://www.jiaarts.org/rotating>

⁷⁶ Phyllis VanIstendal, "Flying High After Ten Years: Airport Arts Program Celebrates Anniversary," located in AAA database, press release September 3, 2008, 3.

audiences to visit struggling local museums and historic sites? Airports are places where individuals with downtime make great use of social media. If a passenger has time and sees an interesting historical artifact, she might take a selfie, create a hashtag, or generally allow history to pop up in more unexpected places.

ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORY EXHIBITS DISPLAYED AT PHL'S ART AT THE AIRPORT

I have taken as my primary sources for this study on the topic of Philadelphia International Airport's Art at the Airport Program the program's own Art Exhibitions Archives.⁷⁷ There are three hundred and sixty exhibits listed in this archive. From this, I created a data set separating the history exhibits from the art exhibits. The art exhibits can be categorized into thirteen different categories: 1) Collage and Murals 2) Drawings and Illustrations, 3) Heritage Art, 4) Landscape 5) Object and Furniture and 3-D Forms, 6) Other, 7) Philly-Centric Art, 8) Photography and Prints, 9) Portraits and Paintings, 10) Puppetry, 11) Sculpture and Ceramics, 12) Textiles, 13) Youth Art.⁷⁸ This analysis will only explore the history exhibits.

⁷⁷ "Archived Art Exhibitions," Philadelphia International Airport, Accessed April 6, 2017, <https://www.phl.org/Arts/Pages/Archived-Art-Exhibitions.aspx>

⁷⁸ Appendix B; I also want to note that I determined these categories.

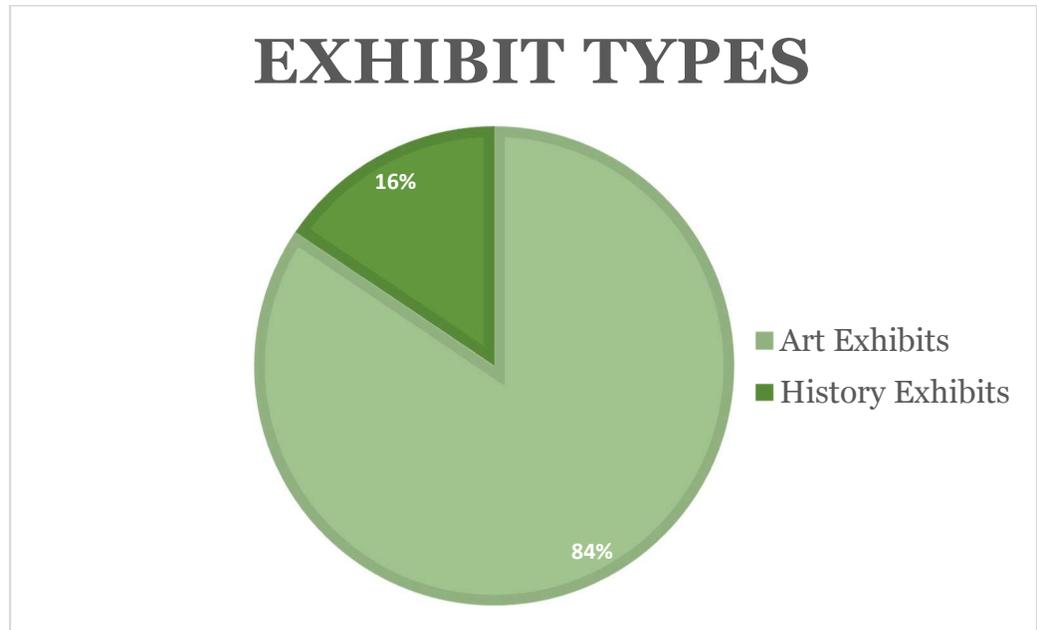


Figure 5: Chart courtesy of author showing the percentage difference between AAA Art Exhibits and History Exhibits

Of the three-hundred and sixty exhibits only fifty-four are history exhibits. I defined them as history exhibits based on the American Historical Association’s Thematic Areas of Interest.⁷⁹ Within these history exhibits I also identified four other themes that were common: Anniversary, Industry, Fashion/Jewelry, and Nostalgia. The dataset is categorized into five columns: Exhibit Name, Exhibit Dates, Partnership, Historic Themes, and Critical History.⁸⁰ From this chart, I was able to identify the types of historical themes PHL’s Art at the Airport has displayed over nearly twenty years.

The first history exhibit ever displayed was called: *Millennium Philadelphia: The Last 100 Years*. The exhibit was displayed from June 14, 1999 - March 31, 2000, just in time for the

⁷⁹ Appendix C

⁸⁰ Appendix A

Millennium. In fact, one will see that most exhibits match up with either an anniversary of an occasion or a big event that is happening in Philadelphia. This exhibit was based on a book published by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* by the same name. The exhibit displayed photographs that were published in the book. The photographs show the city's past: the people, events, and places that make Philadelphia unique. The next time Art the Airport would partner with *The Philadelphia Inquirer* would be in June 7, 2000 - October 19, 2000. The exhibit, *Presidential Election Headlines: Lincoln to Clinton*, was timed in correlation with the 2000 Republican National Convention, which was held in Philadelphia. It displayed thirty-five front pages from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* depicting election headlines. The pages span from the election of President Abraham Lincoln to President Bill Clinton and give a unique Philadelphia perspective of the elections. Coincidentally, the latest exhibit to be archived is *Political Pins: Collection of Alfio J. Brindisi* which was displayed June 4, 2016 - January 2, 2017 in time for the 2016 Democratic National Convention. This exhibit shows political pins from the 1864 presidential campaign to the 2016 presidential campaign. My personal favorite political pin in this display says "In Socks We Trust." Socks was Former President Bill Clinton and 2016 Presidential Democratic Nominee Hillary Clinton's cat while they resided in the White House.⁸¹ These examples show how special events like the new millennium or even presidential conventions come to be a part of what is being displayed at the airport.

⁸¹ I was an intern at AAA when this exhibit was being installed so I was able to see first-hand how the political pins were arranged. This is also why I have a favorite button because I spent so much time looking at the display.

Only two out of the fifty-four exhibit showed a critical take on the past. The first “critical” history exhibit was *Tuskegee Airmen: 70 Years of Aviation History* which was shown June 27, 2011-June 13, 2012. The exhibit was located in Terminal A-East, the same terminal that the Presidential Conventions Exhibit was displayed. This location usually displays an exhibit year round instead of rotating every six months. *The Tuskegee Airmen: 70 Years of Aviation History* told the important history of the Tuskegee Airmen who overcame adversity and discrimination to become heroes of World War II. The exhibit also told the story of how they came to be, from the first meeting Senator Harry S. Truman held about African-America pilots being trained to flight instruction training at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama to the military flight training on July 19, 1941.⁸² The cadets, despite training to become military fighter pilots, were segregated by “separate but equal” training facilities. This meant that they could not train with the white pilots. However, the Tuskegee Airmen helped changed that law. In part because of these pilots, President Harry S. Truman signed an Executive Order in 1948, which finally ended segregation in the armed forces. *Tuskegee Airmen: 70 Years of Aviation History* told an important and critical history of the United States as well as presenting the story of these men overcoming adversity.

Two years later in the same very same terminal, *Civil Rights in Philadelphia*, displayed from July 2, 2014 to June 14, 2015, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the *Civil Rights Act of*

⁸² “Tuskegee Airmen: 70 Years of Aviation History,” Philadelphia International Airport, Accessed April 14, 2017, <https://www.phl.org/Arts/Pages/Archivedexhibitions/TuskegeeAirmen70YearsofAviationHistory.aspx>

1964.⁸³ This exhibit seems to have been the only exhibit to mention slavery, and it also included LBGQT and disability rights in its accompanying text. In many ways, an exhibit like these breaks the mold for the AAA program, which generally does not exhibit controversial or upsetting exhibits. But the anniversary of the bill allowed for an open space to talk about Philadelphia's long history of establishing America's earliest civil liberties. This began with William Penn in 1681 when he began to govern Pennsylvania with "equality and tolerance" which led to The Charter of Privileges in 1701 which "granted certain rights to the citizens of Pennsylvania and included the freedom of religion."⁸⁴ It featured the importance of The Declaration of Independence in 1776; the founding of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1912; the 1951 founding of the Commission on Human Relations (an agency that enforces the city's laws prohibiting discrimination and promotes equal rights and opportunities for all Philadelphians); and the 1960s protests in the city around the issues of civil rights, including the picketing of Girard College, which made national news for only admitting white male orphans, and the Reminder Days, which were the city's first gay rights protest which led to annual gay rights pickets at Independence Hall. Lastly, the exhibit covered Philadelphia's civil rights activism today. It argued that

⁸³ *The Civil Rights Act of 1964*, signed into law by President Johnson on July 2, 1964, was historical legislation that outlawed major forms of discrimination. The Act strengthened voting rights, it prohibited discrimination and segregation in public places, prohibited segregation in public schools, and prohibited discrimination in the work place. Its purpose was to improve the quality of life for all Americans. It is described as an Act that "did not resolve all problems of discrimination but it opened the door to further progress."

⁸⁴ "Civil Rights in Philadelphia," Philadelphia International Airport, Accessed April 5, 2017, <https://www.phl.org/Arts/Pages/Archivedexhibitions/Civilrights.aspx>

“Philadelphia is proud of its past contributions to advance equality and embraces its multi-ethnic and multi-spiritual citizenry. The City has continued to be a leader in supporting the civil rights of women and the LGBT community. And as the birthplace of America, Philadelphia will continue its legacy to protect the freedoms and rights of all Philadelphians.”⁸⁵ The exhibit incorporates photographs from different time periods and organizations to enhance the argument. *Civil Rights in Philadelphia* covers a nearly a three hundred and fifty-year time span of Philadelphia’s fight for civil liberties which is amazing considering the exhibit began as a fiftieth anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Just because only two exhibit told a critical history story does not mean that the other fifty-two history exhibits are not important. Exhibits like: *The Collection of the Philadelphia Doll Museum: The History of Black Dolls*; *Byron Scott: Black Diamonds Photographs*; *ODUNDE African American Festival: Twenty-Seven Years on South Street*; *The African American Museum in Philadelphia*; *Kenneth Gamble & Leon Huff: Philadelphia's Music Legends*; *Philadelphia's Baseball Legends: The Championship Teams*; *John W. Mosley: Photographs of Philadelphia's African-American Community*; *Come See About Me: The Mary Wilson Supremes Collection*; *About Philadelphia: A City of Firsts*; and *Philadelphia's New Freedom Theatre @ 50*—all cover African American history in the displays. Some are based off of famous musicians while others are about sports, popular culture, or photographs about culture and communities. While exhibits do not in any way bring up the controversies of slavery, they do, however, celebrate twentieth-century African American history culture in Philadelphia.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Exhibits focused on celebrations, special occasions, or anniversaries are common. Other exhibits like the *ODUNDE African American Festival: Twenty-Seven Years on South Street* was a display based on a festival that happens on South Street every year. *A Celebration of the National Wildlife Refuge System: 100 Years, 1903 – 2003* discussed the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge located in Tinicum, Pennsylvania. It was founded in 1972 by an act of Congress to protect the last 205 acres of freshwater tidal marsh in Pennsylvania. It is home to some endangered species as well as a wide variety of plants and wildlife. Another example of an anniversary is *75 Years of Commercial Air Service @ PHL Since 1940*. This 2015 exhibit celebrated the history of the airport's founding in 1940, with only four carriers and 40,000 passengers in the first year, to today, where there are 27 carriers that offer air service to 131 domestic and international destinations making PHL one of the busiest airports in the United States serving more than 30 million passengers a year. Displaying anniversaries allows for the audience to see the evolution of a place, institution, or event. It not only reveals the history, but it tells the story of how an event or place has flourished over time.

A theme that showed up in nearly every exhibit was the idea of the “public.” For this thesis this theme is clearly important. Often the term public was used because these exhibit were ones that partnered with other area institutions like The Franklin Mint; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Drexel University Historic Costume Collection; University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; the Shoe Museum of Temple University's School of Podiatric Medicine; Philadelphia Doll Museum; Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent; African American Museum in Philadelphia; Museum of American Glass at Wheaton Village; Fireman's Hall Museum; Temple University Libraries; National Constitution Center; Library

Company of Philadelphia; Independence Seaport Museum; Simeone Foundation Automotive Museum; and Wagner Free Institute of Science. These institutions range from art museums to maritime history to historical societies that collect and display model cars and dolls. The partnerships between the airport and the institutions allows for the exhibit to have more information, but it also gives a spotlight to the institution when exhibiting their “stuff” and their history to a broad audience.

All of these exhibits are rotating except one. *Movies Made in Philadelphia: Selected Posters from the Greater Philadelphia Film Office* is the only permanent historical exhibit at the airport. It does not have any signage, but the exhibit shows movie posters from films that were filmed in Philadelphia. The movie posters do change. Some are added while others are taken away, but *Rocky* will always stay because it is a such a strong symbol of Philadelphia popular culture and nostalgia. Popular Culture and nostalgia are two themes that were prominent in many of the exhibits. *All Aboard* was an exhibit about toy trains while *Building the Ballpark: Phillies Stadium History* explained the history of the Phillies Stadium. Popular culture and nostalgia may not seem like it always deals with critical historical topics, but they will often make an exhibit stand out above the rest.

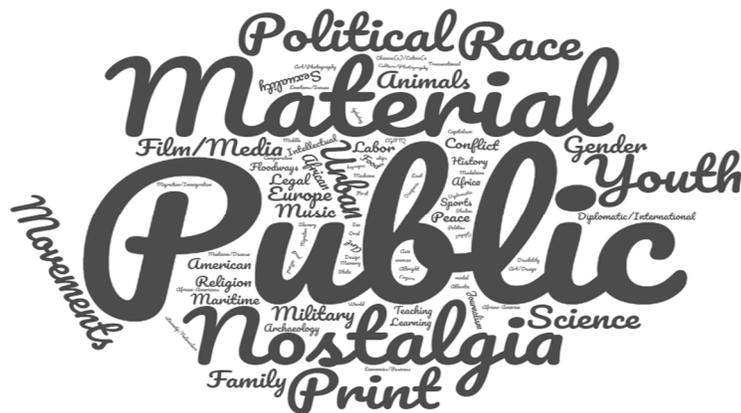


Figure 6: Word Cloud courtesy of author that shows the different themes used to classify the history exhibits

This analysis of the history exhibits shows the range of topics that are displayed at the airport. The exhibits range from photograph collections to newspaper headlines to political pins. The variety of topics covered by exhibits at Art at the Airport has allowed for the broad audiences of the airport to find something they may find interesting: from dolls, model cars, beer bottles, to even shoes. All of these exhibits are related to Philadelphia in some way either through an institution, location, or through local Philadelphia collectors like Alfio Brindisi. The exhibits tell stories and entice the audience to want to know more about the subject. Perhaps even inspiring them to visit the museum or institution where the collections are held. The dataset shows that over the near twenty years that PHL’s Art at the Airport has been around, the exhibits have become more argumentative, visual, and historical.

⁸⁶ This word cloud produced by wordclouds.com shows all of the themes used to categorize the history exhibits in the dataset. The bigger words seen in the cloud like “public,” “material,” and “nostalgia” are the themes that were used the most in the dataset.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS: HISTORY IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

When Penny Balkin Bach writes of place-based public art, she reminds us to “just think about the significance of ‘place:’ place in living, place occupied, place located, place of occurrence, place in the social order, place recognized, establishing place, how one identifies place and gains identity through it.”⁸⁷ Similarly, Dolores Hayden, in her treatise *The Power or Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, argues for community based public history and writes that if Americans could find their own “social history preserved in the public landscapes of their own neighborhoods and cities, then [their] connection to the past might be very different.”⁸⁸ Place plays an important factor in choosing where to create a piece of public art or where to tell a historic story.

So, what is place? Dolores Hayden argues that place is “one of the trickiest words in the English language.”⁸⁹ Her full definition is worth considering:

It carries the resonance of homestead, location, and open space in the city as well as a position in a social hierarchy. The authors of books on architecture, photography, cultural geography, poetry, and travel rely on ‘sense of place’ as an aesthetic concept but often settle for ‘the personality of location’ as a way of defining it. Place for such authors may engage patterns in the mellow brick of an

⁸⁷ Penny Balkin Bach, *New Land Marks: Public Art, Community, and The Meaning of Place*, (Philadelphia: Fairmount Park Art Association, 2001), 13.

⁸⁸ Dolores Hayden, *The Power or Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1997), 46.

⁸⁹ Hayden, 15.

eighteenth-century building, the sweep of the Great Plains, the bustle of a small harbor full of sailboats, but such images can easily become clichés of tourist advertising. In the nineteenth century and earlier, place also carried a sense of the right of a person to own a piece of land, or to be a part of a social world, and in this older sense of place contains more political history. Phrases like ‘knowing one’s place’ or ‘a woman’s place’ still imply both spatial and political meanings.⁹⁰

Because Hayden is concerned with urban public history, she most keenly believes that “place needs to be at the heart of urban landscape history, not on the margins, because the aesthetic qualities of the built environment, positive or negative, need to be understood as inseparable from those of the natural environment.”⁹¹ This means that place can have good or bad connotations, but that it is important to public history as well as memory. For Hayden all places hold memories which are important and that need to be remembered. How we form attachments to place is not only material but social and imaginative as well, and it is necessary to expand public history in urban landscapes.

HISTORY AND ART IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

The goal of using an unexpected place for either public art or public history is to engage an audience and promote new interactions among people who might not usually speak. Such projects can change a “boring” place into a dynamic place. They can liven up a public space, attract tourists, or even create a sense of community in a neighborhood.

⁹⁰ Hayden, 15-16.

⁹¹ Hayden, 18.

The places when using public art and public history can create an identity, improve relationships, the quality of life of the community, and it can make a place more attractive to live, work, visit, or pass by.

What makes place unexpected? Is there a difference between unexpected and an expected place to see public art or public history? If one goes into an art museum or a history museum, then one would expect to see art or history. Seeing something in an unexpected place allows for a new experience. The airport is a prime unexpected place for people to see art or history exhibits. One passenger from Providence, Rhode Island wrote of Philadelphia's Art at the Airport:

Even if I had a lot of time to kill in an airport, I don't think I would go inside an actual gallery space at the airport. I'm not going to go to the bus station to catch an opera, nor to Burger King to see a play. However, I do like to see art placed in public spaces without pretension. Not only does it enhance the atmosphere of the place, but it makes the art function by placing it in a living and active space. To some extent, placing art in a museum is like killing an animal and putting the trophy head on the wall. The life is gone. So, I'm very excited to see some contemporary art hanging in a living, breathing space. It also reflects well on Philadelphia, and for the whole country, especially since it's an international airport.⁹²

An unexpected place allows for more conversation, and it has the ability to make a place more aesthetically pleasing as well as calming. Another passenger wrote that the exhibits allowed for a calming effect.⁹³

⁹² Audience Survey for PHL AAA Database 12-12-2005 Providence, RI #321 ID#1005

⁹³ Audience Survey for PHL AAA Database 4-29-2003 Providence, RI #98 ID#775

Ellen Dissanayake, Author, Lecturer, and Affiliate Professor in the School of Music at University of Washington, states in her chapter, “Why Public Art is Necessary,” that “without the arts, we are incomplete human beings.” She goes on to argue that there are ten psychological benefits of the arts:

(1) provide a sense of identity; (2) build community and reciprocity; (3) allow the physical and psychological satisfaction of making and creating something with one’s hands and body; (4) engage nonverbal parts of our minds; (5) enhance and enrich both the natural and the man-made environments; (6) help us to deal with anxiety; (7) provide refreshment, pleasure, and enjoyment; (8) put us in touch with important life concerns; (9) acknowledge the things we care about, and allow us the opportunity to mark or celebrate that caring; and (10) awaken us to deeper self-understanding and to higher levels of consciousness.⁹⁴

Dissanayake makes the point that art can change a person’s mental state for the better. So, why not have it in stressful places like a DMV, Airport, Post Office, or Hospital-- these are all places with a guaranteed wait time. What if the people waiting in line viewed an exhibit that could teach them about the city, the place where they were standing, or make them ask a new historical question? Has this always been a post office/hospital? What is the story of the pony express? How did drivers’ licenses come about? The unexpected place shows that even in the most boring places there is a place for creativity and for learning.

⁹⁴ Ellen Dissanayake, “Why Public Art is Necessary,” in *New Land Marks: Public Art, Community, and The Meaning of Place*, (Philadelphia: Fairmount Park Art Association, 2001), 27-28.

Not everyone agrees that an unexpected place is the best place to contemplate art. Carol Duncan, an art historian and the author of *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, argues that museums allow for a total experience of art for the public. She states that museums allow “individuals to achieve a liminal experience to move beyond the psychic constraints of mundane existence, step out of time, and attain new larger perspectives.”⁹⁵ Duncan believes that the only way to understand, appreciate, and enjoy art is to actually be at an art museum. Whereas proponents of Mural Arts, Art in the Airport, or even Funeral for a Home, find art or history in unexpected places allow the public freedom of interpretation. Viewers of the art do not have to know the about the long and elite history of art; they do not have to understand it; all they have to do is react to.

So, what if there was a type of public art or even a small exhibit at an unexpected place like a DMV, hospital, or even at the dentist’s office? Would it make waiting a little more bearable? Do you think you could learn something new about the history of a business or town? Or if there was art nearby, or a history exhibit, could it calm your nerves before a root canal? Having public art and public history in unexpected places like this could make a difference in your experience. Unlike a museum, which has to work to get patrons in the door, in places like the airport, the DMV, and along stretches of highway prone to traffic jams the audience is already there. While traditional

⁹⁵ Carol Duncan, *Civilizing rituals: Inside public art museums*, (London, England: Routledge, 1995), 15.

museumgoers might take issue with this way of interacting with art and history, does that make the art experience any less moving or important? The most unexpected place for some to find art or history is in the airport which is what the next chapter will be about.

GOING FORWARD: CRITICAL PUBLIC HISTORY AND ART IN UNEXPECTED PLACE

This thesis began as a question I wanted to answer at a summer internship with Philadelphia's International Airport's Art at the Airport Program. I wanted to know if public art and public history could work cohesively in unexpected places. I wanted to prove that it could and occasionally does work at places like the airport. Using other case studies here help us see that even historical sites can use public art to their advantage to create a broader audience. Public art is a part of our public history, a part of our evolving culture, our memory, and increasingly a very important method that public historians should be able to deploy. When we do use it successfully, it shows and reflects our history and adds meaning to our communities. This study, in the end, shows us that public art that intersects with public history can add to a city's critical and vibrant development. It can also be used to connect residents to their past, their city's history, their neighborhood stories, and immediate concerns, and sometimes unite communities. But how does it do this? What do all these case studies have in common? Though each project was developed by radically different institutions--an airport, a mural collective, a historic house museum, an art gallery, and an historic meeting house-- with very different missions, purposes, and sites, each institution at its core has the same goal to reach the

public. Their staffs want to make the public react whether that be to gain an audience, help people pass the time, ease stress, create awareness, raise money, or cause conversation. But how do they go about it?

There are five key requirements for doing this kind of interdisciplinary work, or translating what we can learn from successful public art projects to successful public history projects: 1) Patience: creating partnership projects like *Funeral for a Home* or Landmark's *Shadow House* take time—years, and require staff to develop and cultivate relationships communities and funders; 2) Clear Process: developing a concrete process (like Mural Arts and Art at the Airport), or borrowing one (as Arch Street Meeting did) is essential, especially with organizations that plan on replicating similar projects; 3) Community Engagement: from involving community members in every step of the process like Mural Arts, to using only community artists as Art at the Airport does, community engagement is essential in both mission and audience development; 4) Visual Focus: half of the goal for any public art is that it will make someone stop to take a second look, history projects have to meet this same standard; 5) Need: perhaps most essential to such partnerships is to clearly establish both a community and institutional need for projects.

Every institution that begins this kind of work must be keenly aware of its community. While Art at the Airport only uses artists and displays from the surrounding Philadelphia and while Mural Arts Philadelphia makes sure to involve the residents of the community, both also recognize that the visibility of their murals and exhibits are sometimes a visitor's first introduction to Philadelphia. Their projects allow visitors to

see what Philadelphia art and history is about without having to have knowledge about art or history and without having to make arrangements to visit the inside of a museum. The core of the Arch Street Meeting House project profiled here was an attempt to both reach out to Philadelphia residents and tourists – by using a strong visual element to engage the average person as she or he walked by and to start a real conversation that connected our goals for today to the history of social justice work. Likewise, Landmarks wanted both work with and via *Shadow House* a younger “history curious” art community, because most who currently visit the Powel House are older tourists interested in the Revolutionary War.

If public historians make sure that their work is accompanied by a vibrant display, audiences will go look for more detail. Art at the Airport exhibits are always careful to use bright infographics so signage will be bright against the white walls of the airport. For example, the current exhibit, *Philadelphia’s Presidential Convention History, 1848-2016*, background is a waving American Flag, which is covered with pictures of the presidential and vice presidential nominees, convention photos, photos of the nominee’s platform, memorabilia, political posters, political pins, the place of the convention, and even a ticket to one of the conventions. Each picture is accompanied by one label sentence that allows for the history of that convention and the outcome of the election. In this and all cases where public history is exhibited in public spaces, one of the key elements is the very concise use of language alongside vibrant images. Perhaps the most essential element of public history that engages in public art methods, is the need for the project and a dialogue that surrounds its need from both institutional and community perspectives. Such needs must be there for the project to be successful.

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APPENDIX A: HISTORY EXHIBIT DATASET

Exhibit Name:	Date:	Partnership:	Historic Themes:	Critical History:
Millennium Philadelphia: The Last 100 Years	June 14, 1999 - March 31, 2000	<i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i>	Anniversary, Local, Photography, Print Culture, Public	
Precision Models From the Franklin Mint, Media, Pennsylvania	August 6, 1999 - February 5, 2000	The Franklin Mint	Art/Architecture/Design, Childhood and Youth, Cultural, Industry, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Photography, Popular Culture, Public, Technology	
Mummers Style: Costumes from the Mummers Museum, Philadelphia	November 23, 1999 - April 19, 2000	Mummers Museum	Cultural, Fashion/Jewelry, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Print Culture, Public, Social	
Building the Ballpark: Phillies Stadium History	June 7, 2000 - October 19, 2000	Philadelphia Phillies	Art/Architecture/Design, Cultural, Emotions/Senses, Family, Local, Popular Culture, Social, Sports, Technology	
Presidential Election Headlines: Lincoln to Clinton	June 7, 2000 - October 19, 2000	<i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i>	Biography, Citizenship/Nationalism, Film/Media, Journalism, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Political, Popular Culture, Print Culture, Public, Social	
Show Us Your Shoes: A Stroll Through History	June 12, 2000 - October 30, 2003	Philadelphia Museum of Art; Drexel University Historic Costume Collection, Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania	Cultural, Fashion/Jewelry, Gender, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Public, Social	

Exhibit Name:	Date:	Partnership:	Historic Themes:	Critical History:
		Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia; and the Shoe Museum of Temple University's School of Podiatric Medicine.		
Political Memorabilia: From the Collection of Alfio J. Brindisi	July 10, 2000 - November 8, 2000	Alfio J. Brindisi	Citizenship/Nationalism, Cultural, Fashion/Jewelry, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Political, Print Culture, Public, Social, Social Movements	
Edmund Bacon's Model Theater Presents: Cinderella	November 1, 2000 - May 1, 2001	Edmund Bacon	Art/Architecture/Design, Biography, Childhood and Youth, Cultural, Europe, Film/Media, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Public, Social, Technology, Transnational,	
All Aboard	November 15, 2000-January 8, 2001	The Train Collectors Association, Atlantic Division	Childhood and Youth, Local, Nostalgia	
The Collection of the Philadelphia Doll Museum: The History of Black Dolls	November 2, 2001 - May 5, 2002	Philadelphia Doll Museum	African-American, Biography, Cultural, Childhood and Youth, Gender, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Popular Culture, Public, Race and Ethnicity, Women, World/Global	

Exhibit Name:	Date:	Partnership:	Historic Themes:	Critical History:
Byron Scott: Black Diamonds, Photographs	January 19, 2002- June 23, 2002	Byron Scott	African-American, Biography, Cultural, Economics/Business, Family, Memory Studies, Migration, Oral, Print Culture/Photography, Race and Ethnicity, Urban	
ODUNDE African American Festival: Twenty- Seven Years on South Street	June 8, 2002- September 25, 2002	ODUNDE/ Philadelphia Folklore Project	African-American, Anniversary, Cultural, Local, Photography, Public, Social	
A Celebration of the National Wildlife Refuge System: 100 Years, 1903 - 2003	March 3, 2003- ?	National Wildlife Refuge System/John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge,	Animals, Anniversary, Environmental, Local	
Civil Engineering: Philadelphia	August 15, 2003- December 28, 2003	National Historic Civil Engineering Landmarks	Art/Architecture/Design, Industry, Local, Technology	
Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent	December 19, 2003- June 15, 2004	Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent	Biography, Cultural, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Photography, Public	
Lewis and Clark's Philadelphia Legacy: 200 Years Later	December 20, 2004- May 13, 2005	Academy of Natural Sciences,	Anniversary, Animals, Biography, Education, Environmental, Local, Public, Science, Technology	
The African American Museum in Philadelphia	January 14, 2005- July 13, 2005	African American Museum in Philadelphia	African-American, Art/Architecture/Design, Cultural, Diasporas, Local, Material Culture, Migration/Immigration, Military, Politics, Popular Culture, Print Culture, Photography, Public, Race and Ethnicity, Religion, Slavery, Social, Social	

Exhibit Name:	Date:	Partnership:	Historic Themes:	Critical History:
			Movements, Urban	
The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia America's First Art Museum and Art School Celebrates 200 Years	April 16, 2005- September 19, 2005	The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts	Anniversary, Art/Architecture/Design, Biography, Cultural, Education, Intellectual, Local, Public	
Collection of Helen W. Drutt English: The Allure of a Beautiful Hat	December 14, 2005 - June 2, 2006	Helen W. Drutt English	Art/Architecture/Design, Biography, Cultural, Fashion/Jewelry, Gender, Local, Material Culture, Sexuality, Women, World/Global	
Museum of American Glass at Wheaton Village	July 19, 2005 - February 1, 2006	Museum of American Glass at Wheaton Village	Art/Architecture/Design, Biography, Europe, Industry, Local, Medicine/Disease, Nostalgia, Public, Technology	
Remembering Hog Island, 1917-1921	April 24, 2006 - October 18, 2006		Biography, Capitalism, Industry, Labor, Local, Maritime, Military, Political, Public, Technology, World/Global	
Kenneth Gamble & Leon Huff	June 6, 2006 - January 11, 2007		African-American, Cultural, Local, Material Culture, Music, Public, Social, World/Global	

Exhibit Name:	Date:	Partnership:	Historic Themes:	Critical History:
Asia, Africa, and the Americas	July 31, 2006 - November 10, 2006	The Design Center at Philadelphia University	Art/Architecture/Design, Cultural, Material Culture, Public, World/Global	
Shells From the Malacology Collection at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia	November 17, 2006 - June 14, 2007	The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University	Education, Environmental, Intellectual, Local, Maritime, Public, Science	
AMARNA: Birthplace of King Tut	May 24, 2007 - November 5, 2007	University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.	Africa, Biography, Empire, Global, Public	
Philadelphia's Music Legends	June 27, 2008-June 22, 2009		African-American, Cultural, Local, Music, Photography, Popular Culture, Race and Ethnicity, Social, Urban, Women, World/Global	
Philadelphia's Baseball Legends: The Championship Teams	July 3, 2009-June 21, 2010		African-American, Cultural, Local, Race and Ethnicity, Social, Sports	
Picturing Liberty: Philadelphia's Legendary Bell	July 2, 2010 - June 15, 2011		Biography, Cultural, Education, Local, Nostalgia, Peace and Conflict, Photography, Public, Social	
The American Flag: History of the Stars and Stripes	June 15, 2011 - October 24, 2011		Citizenship/Nationalism, Cultural, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Political, Social	

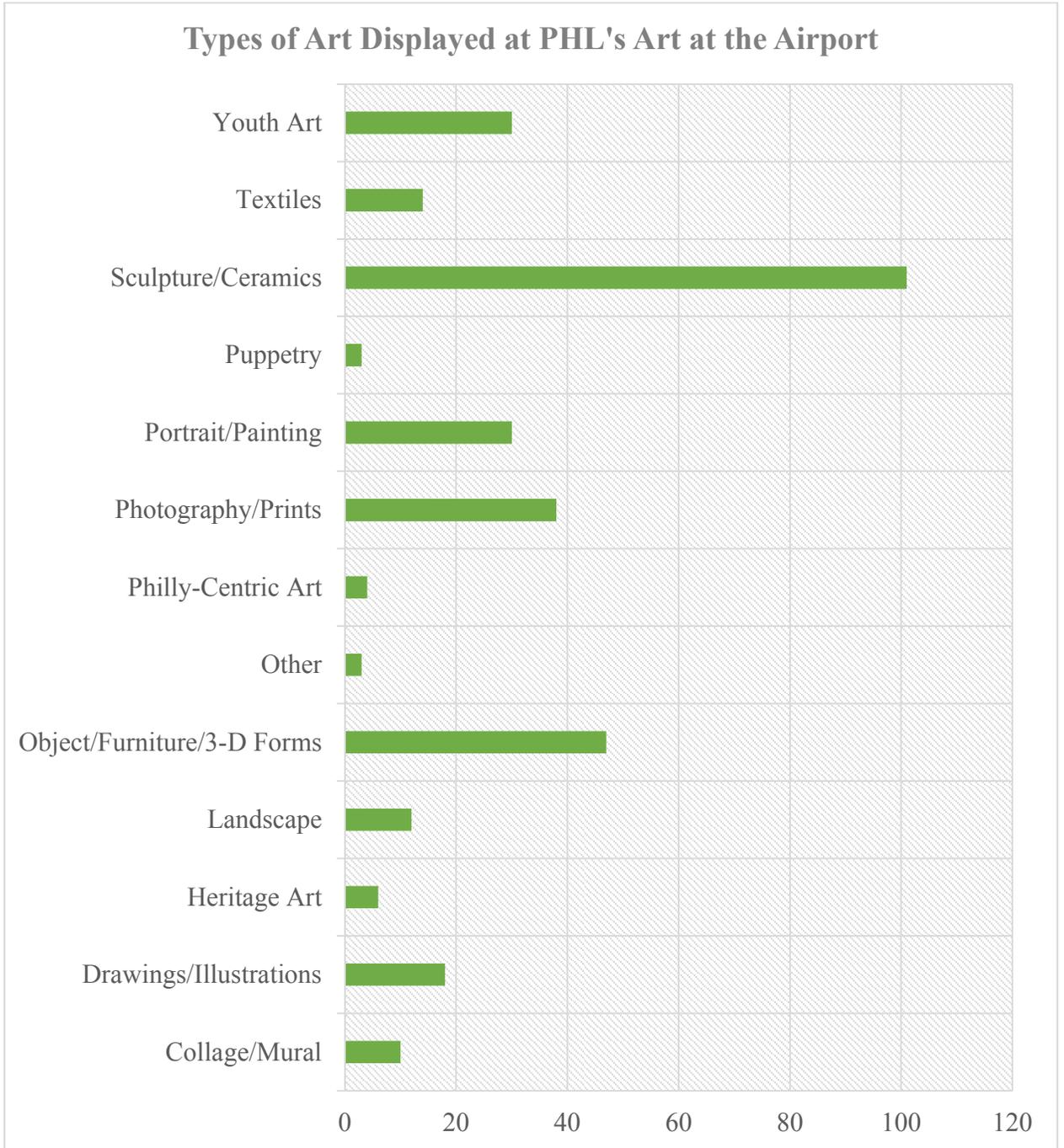
Exhibit Name:	Date:	Partnership:	Historic Themes:	Critical History:
Tuskegee Airmen: 70 Years of Aviation History	June 27, 2011-June 13, 2012		African-American, Anniversary, Biography, Cultural, Local, Military, Peace and Conflict, Photography, Race and Ethnicity, Social Movements	✕
Moravian Pottery and Tile Works: The Art of Handmade Tiles	August 15, 2011 - March 4, 2012	The Moravian Pottery and Tile Works	Art/Architecture/Design, Archaeology, Biography, Industry, Local, Material Culture, Public	
Fireman’s Hall Museum, Philadelphia	October 14, 2011 – April 29, 2012	Fireman’s Hall Museum	Biography, Environmental, Labor, Local, Material Culture, Public, Social	
John W. Mosley: Photographs of Philadelphia’s African-American Community	November 1, 2011- September 4, 2012	Charles L. Blockson Afro- American Collection at Temple University Libraries	African-American, Biography, Cultural, Education, Local, Material Culture, Public, Race and Ethnicity, Urban	
The Academy Takes Flight	May 4, 2012- January 23, 2013	The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University	Animals, Anniversary, Education, Environmental, Local, Public, Science, World/Global	
Faces of Freedom: The Constitution at 225	June 29, 2012 - June 11, 2013	National Constitution Center	Anniversary, Biography, Cultural, Legal, Local, Political, Print Culture, Public	
Model Airplanes: From the West Jersey Radio Control Club	July 24, 2012- February 15, 2013	Jersey Radio Control Club	Biography, Europe, Industry, Local, Nostalgia, Public, Technology	
Life in Philadelphia: 1840s - 1930s	September 14, 2012 - September 22, 2013	Library Company of Philadelphia	Art/Architecture/Design, Biography, Education, History Teaching and Learning, Local, Material Culture, Print Culture, Public, Social	

Exhibit Name:	Date:	Partnership:	Historic Themes:	Critical History:
The Garden Club of America at 100	January 31, 2013 - October 9, 2013	Garden Club of America	Anniversary, Cultural, Education, Environmental, Labor, Local, Material Culture, Political, Print Culture, Public, Science, Social, Social Movements, Women, World/Global	
Come See About Me: The Mary Wilson Supremes Collection	February 12, 2013 - July 7, 2013	African American Museum in Philadelphia	African-American, biography, cultural, Fashion/Jewelry, Film/Media, Local, Material Culture, Music, Nostalgia, Popular Culture, Public, Race and Ethnicity, Sexuality, Social, Social Movements, Urban, Women	
The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Celebrates 185 Years	March 15, 2013 - October 30, 2013	Pennsylvania Horticulture Society	Anniversary, Childhood and Youth, Cultural, Education, Environmental, Family, Local, Public, Science, Social, Social Movements, Urban	
Philadelphia's Beer Brewing Legacy	May 24, 2013 - January 1, 2014	Dale Van Wieren and Lawrence Handy Jr	Biography, Cultural, Industry, Food and Foodways, Legal, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Political, Popular Culture, Public, Social, World/Global	
Philadelphia's Literary Legacy:	July 2, 2013 - June 15, 2014	Free Library of Philadelphia	Biography, Childhood and Youth, Cultural, Education, History Teaching and Learning, Journalism, Local, Popular Culture, Print Culture, Public, Social	
9 to 5: Vintage Office Equipment	October 18, 2013 - June 3, 2014	Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent	Local, Material Culture, Public, Technology	

Exhibit Name:	Date:	Partnership:	Historic Themes:	Critical History:
Pennsylvania Ballet at 50	November 7, 2013 - May 26, 2014	The Pennsylvania Ballet	Anniversary, Biography, Cultural, Local, Photography, Popular Culture, Public, Social	
Model Ships: Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia	June 11, 2014 - December 2, 2014	Independence Seaport Museum	Local, Maritime, Material Culture, Military, Public, Technology	
Civil Rights in Philadelphia	July 2, 2014 - June 14, 2015		African-American, Anniversary, Chicano(a)/Latino(a), Childhood and Youth, Citizenship/Nationalism, Cultural, Disability, Education, Family, Gender, Legal, LGBTQ, Local, Peace and Conflict, Political, Race and Ethnicity, Religion, Sexuality, Social, Social Movements, Urban, Women	✕
Opera Philadelphia @ 40	February 14, 2015 - October 4, 2015		Anniversary, Europe, Film/Media, Local, Music, Popular Culture, Public, Social	
About Philadelphia: A City of Firsts	July 2, 2015 - June 5, 2016		African-American, Animals, Art, Childhood and Youth, Cultural, Diplomatic, Education, Family, Food and Foodways, Local, Political, Medicine, Religion, Science, Technology, Women	
75 Years of Commercial Air Service @ PHL Since 1940	July 30, 2015 - December 13, 2015		Anniversary, Design, Local, Technology	

Exhibit Name:	Date:	Partnership:	Historic Themes:	Critical History:
The REVolution of Racing Sports Cars	February 2, 2016 - January 18, 2017	Simeone Foundation Automotive Museum	Cultural, Education, Industry, Local, Nostalgia, Photography, Popular Culture, Print Culture, Public, Technology, World/Global	
SCIENCE, NATURE, & ART in PHILADELPHIA	April 15, 2016 - November 13, 2016	Wagner Free Institute of Science	Youth Art: Animals, Archaeology, Biography, Childhood and Youth, Education, Environmental, Local, Public, Science	
Philadelphia's New Freedom Theatre @ 50	May 27, 2016 - December 23, 2016	Philadelphia's New Freedom Theatre	African-American, Anniversary, Biography, Cultural, Education, Local, Public, Race and Ethnicity, Social	
Political Pins: Collection of Alfio J. Brindisi	June 4, 2016 - January 2, 2017	Alfio J. Brindisi	Citizenship/Nationalism, Cultural, Local, Material Culture, Nostalgia, Political, Print Culture, Public, Social, Social Movements	
Movies Made in Philadelphia: Selected Posters from the Greater Philadelphia Film Office	Permanent		Film/Media, Popular Culture, Public, Social	

APPENDIX B: TYPES OF ART DISPLAYED AT PHL'S ART AT THE AIRPORT



APPENDIX C: THEMATIC AREAS OF INTEREST

American Historical Association Thematic Areas of Interest		
African-American	Environmental	Military
Agrarian/Rural	Ethnohistory	Music
Animals	Family	Oral
Archaeology	Film/Media/Photography	Pacific World
Art/Architecture/Design	Food and Foodways	Peace and Conflict
Asian American	Gender	Political
Atlantic World	Genocide	Popular Culture
Biography	Historiography/Historical Theory and Method	Post-Colonial
Borderlands	History Teaching and Learning	Print Culture
Capitalism	Iberian World	Public
Cartography	Indian Ocean World	Quantitative Methods
Chicano(a)/Latino(a)	Indigenous	Race and Ethnicity
Childhood and Youth	Intellectual	Religion
Citizenship/Nationalism	Jewish	Science
Comparative	Journalism	Sexuality
Cultural	Labor	Slavery
Demography	Legal	Social
Diasporas	LGBTQ	Social Movement
Digital Methods	Local	Sports
Diplomatic/International	Maritime	Technology
Disability	Material Culture	Transnational
Economic/Business	Medicine/Disease	Urban
Education	Mediterranean World	Women
Emotions/Senses	Memory Studies	World/Global
Empire	Migration/Immigration	