



# PHILADELPHIA FINDINGS





TITLE PAGE:  
*Fingerspan*, Jody Pinto,  
1987, Wissahickon  
Creek.

## INVENTORY

Public art is a ubiquitous part of Philadelphia's built environment. Philadelphia has far more public art than any other city, according to a recent study by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art.<sup>23</sup>

It is the variety as well as sheer quantity that puts Philadelphia's public art collection in a league of its own. As of December 2008, the Fairmount Park Art Association's inventory counts 1,458 works of public art within Philadelphia's city limits. This collection primarily consists of outdoor sculpture, with a longstanding history that "practically parallels the history of American sculpture."<sup>24</sup> This inventory does not include the work of the Mural Arts Program (MAP), a social services program that uses arts education and public-art making as a vehicle for social change, and has created 3,000 murals since its inception in 1984. And if public art initiatives by other smaller community-based art organizations are included, as well as installations by individual artists from Isaiah Zagar's mosaics to Randy Dalton's "Go Blue" campaign, hundreds more pieces are added to the "museum." Because of this, when this study references Philadelphia's public art collection, it includes closer to 5,000 different works: from military memorials to sports monuments, "art parks" in North Philadelphia to "peace walls" in South Philadelphia. And public art in Philadelphia expands even further to include short-lived displays, such as DesignPhiladelphia's temporary exhibitions, performances in public places for the Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe, and Hidden City Philadelphia, which features art installations in some of Philadelphia's most treasured historic structures.

A selected list of today's assets and accomplishments includes:

- The first nonprofit dedicated to integrating public art into the urban environment (Fairmount Park Art Association).
- The first percent for art ordinance in the country (Redevelopment Authority Percent for Fine Arts Program).
- Almost 1,500 pieces of outdoor sculpture, the largest collection in the country.
- Three thousand neighborhood murals, the most of any city in the country (Mural Arts Program).
- Digital inventories of both the outdoor sculpture and mural collections.
- The largest celebration of the impact of design in the country (DesignPhiladelphia).

## HISTORY OF PUBLIC ART IN PHILADELPHIA

Public art in Philadelphia has seen myriad transformations over the more than 300 years since the city's founding. It takes many forms, and the motivation for its creation has shifted over the course of the city's history.

See the next page for a timeline of public art history in Philadelphia.



#### PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC ART TIMELINE<sup>25</sup>

**18th century:** Public art appears early in Philadelphia's history as sculpture on the exterior of buildings as part of a civic improvement ethos.

**18th and early 19th century:** Public art primarily takes the form of artistic commemoration, memorials and monuments.

**1855:** Fairmount Park is created, expanding the arena for the display of art immediately accessible to the public.

**1872:** Fairmount Park Art Association, the first private nonprofit organization in the nation dedicated to integrating public art and urban planning, is founded.

**1876:** The Centennial celebration is held in Fairmount Park, marking one of the most prolific showcases of public art in Philadelphia.

**1894:** Alexander Milne Calder's statue of William Penn is placed on top of City Hall, becoming perhaps the most visible example of Philadelphia's public art. There are 250 total sculptures by Calder that adorn the inside and outside of City Hall.

**1907:** Art Jury (present-day Art Commission) is established as an approval body for city construction projects so that "physical development of the city takes place in a manner that is aesthetically pleasing, orderly and appropriate."

**1917:** Benjamin Franklin Parkway is designed by Jacques Gréber as a hallmark of the City Beautiful movement, integrating art, architecture, landscape and urban design.

**1933-'34:** More than 4,000 artists are commissioned nationally to create approximately 15,000 artworks as part of the first federal public art program, the Public Works of Art Project. This brought numerous new works to Philadelphia.

**Mid-20th century:** Art becomes more controversial and abstract [examples: Isamu Noguchi's *Bolt of Lightning* memorial designed originally for East River Drive (now Kelly Drive) and Jacques Lipchitz's *The Spirit of Enterprise* sculpture along Kelly Drive].

**1959:** The first percent-for-public-art ordinances in the country are established by the Redevelopment Authority and City of Philadelphia.

**1963:** General Service Administration Art in Architecture Program is established by the federal government and allocates one-half of one percent of the estimated construction costs of federal buildings and courthouses for commissioning works of art. Local examples include Louise Nevelson's *Bicentennial Dawn* and Al Held's murals at the Social Security Administration building.



TOP: William Penn statue, Alexander Milne Calder.

MIDDLE: *The Spirit of Enterprise*, Jacques Lipchitz.

BOTTOM: *Bicentennial Dawn*, Louise Nevelson.

**1970s:** Community involvement becomes an increasingly prominent part of public-art making [example: Between 1971 and 1979, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, through its Department of Community Programs (née the Department of Urban Outreach), produced dozens of murals in neighborhoods throughout the city].

**1976:** Claes Oldenburg's *Clothespin* sculpture is installed on the plaza of the Centre Square office complex. The Percent for Fine Arts Program includes banners by Alexander Calder and Jean Dubuffet's *Milord la Chamarre* in the lobby space. The Calders and Dubuffet have since been relocated.

**1984:** Mayor Wilson Goode establishes the Mayor's Cultural Advisory Council and the Art in City Hall program.

**1984:** As part of the city's Anti-Graffiti Network, Mayor Wilson Goode establishes the arts education and mural-making program that later evolved into the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, which connects public art to social service, educational and populist impulses.

**1986:** Mayor Wilson Goode establishes the first City of Philadelphia Office of Arts and Culture.

**1996:** Mural Arts Advocates, the nonprofit arm of the Mural Arts Program, is created in order to help expand projects and fundraising.

**1998:** City officials raise \$3.5 million to purchase the Tiffany mosaic *Dream Garden* by Maxfield Parrish while the artwork was under threat of purchase; the potential buyer was rumored to be casino owner Steve Wynn.

**1998:** City designates *Dream Garden* as Philadelphia's first historic object under the city's historic preservation ordinance. Four other objects have since been designated: *Founders Memorial Bell* (2000), *Pennsylvania Railroad War Memorial* (2001), *Wanamaker Eagle Statue* (2001) and *Dickens and Little Nell* (2001).

**Late 20th and early 21st century:** As city services falter due to population decline, nonprofit organizations such as community arts groups and CDCs implement public art projects as a strategy for neighborhood redevelopment.

**2004:** Mayor John Street closes the Office of Arts and Culture.

**2008:** Mayor Michael Nutter creates the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy.

**2009:** Unseen since the mid-1980s, the Alexander Calder banners are exhibited at the Central Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

**2009:** 50th anniversary of the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority's and the City of Philadelphia's historic Percent for Art programs, and the 25th anniversary of the Mural Arts Program.



TOP: Pennsylvania Railroad War Memorial.  
MIDDLE: Building Connections, Mural Arts Program.  
BOTTOM: Alexander Calder banners, Free Library.

## CURRENT PUBLIC ART PROGRAMS

The following section summarizes the main city agencies and nonprofit organizations that currently create and/or maintain public art in Philadelphia. The two organizational diagrams are schematic and do not capture the full range of public art activities in Philadelphia, but do represent the programs for which public art is the main mission. There is a “before” diagram that shows the public art organizational landscape before the establishment of the OACCE, and the “after” that shows how city government initially intends to structure the new office. Though all the groups listed contribute to the creation, management and conservation of public art in some capacity, they do so with different missions, functions and resources. There are commissioning organizations, public and nonprofit, some of which are legislated by percent-for-art requirements, each with their different jury and approval processes. Others focus on community-driven public art, using art as a tool for strategic redevelopment and reinventing public spaces in more challenged neighborhoods. Members of the public are often involved in the making of the art, sometimes even in the visioning process. The collective efforts of these organizations represent how Philadelphia’s public art legacy is being augmented today.

During the completion of this study, it was believed that the first iteration of the OACCE will be comprised of the following staff and programs for FY2010:

- Moira Baylson, deputy cultural officer (now with Commerce Department as “Cultural Development Manager,” transfer in process)
- Margot Berg, Public Art Division
- Tu Huynh, Art in City Hall
- June O’Neil, Philadelphia Cultural Fund

(part-time consultant, reports to Cultural Fund Board)

- Betsy Riley, executive assistant
- Theresa Rose, Public Art Division
- Gary Steuer, chief cultural officer

Also, the city funding for the Mural Arts Program, currently \$500,000 in staff budget from the Managing Director’s Office (MDO) and a \$500,000 vendor contract, will likely stay with MDO. Though MAP staff will remain in the MDO and not become OACCE staff, the Mural Arts Program will programmatically report to the chief cultural officer.

The “before” diagram on page 38 shows the fragmented nature of the current public art landscape, which demonstrates how increasingly difficult it has become for Philadelphia to maintain and update its collection. However, the fact that there is an initial plan to move existing city government staff into the OACCE shows that a structure is in place to begin to implement recommendations.

## PROGRAMS TO BE PLACED UNDER OFFICE OF ARTS, CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

### *Art in City Hall*

Art in City Hall presents at least three professional exhibitions and a varying number of nonprofessional displays for local students and nonprofit organizations each year in 13 display cases near the office of the mayor and City Council chambers in City Hall. Staff funding is provided by the Department of Public Property, but project funding is raised privately. Though it is a relatively small initiative, the opportunity exists to further expand its offerings which could include additional displays in more architecturally interesting and accessible parts of the building as well as in the outdoor courtyard and plazas. Utilizing the Art in City Hall program as a vehicle for creating temporary and nontraditional public art should be explored.

### *City of Philadelphia Public Art Division*

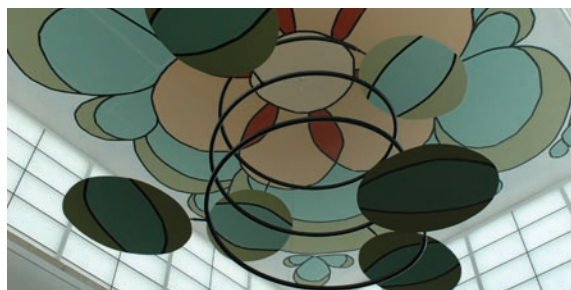
The city's Public Art Division administers the Percent for Art Program for all city capital construction projects, oversees the conservation and preservation of the city's public art collection, and serves as a liaison to facilitate communication among artists, design professionals, city departments and the public. Staff members are currently housed in the Department of Public Property and all funding is project-specific. While the Percent for Art Program has yielded more than 300 works of art, this understaffed division often struggles to keep up with all projects because there is currently no city regulation in place requiring that all departments adhere to the percent requirement to secure Art Commission approval. Questions also

remain about opportunities to extend funding beyond specific sites and secure monies for maintenance beyond emergency conservation efforts. One recent victory on this front is the restoration of Emmanuel Frémiet's *Joan of Arc* sculpture, currently being restored off-site. The program was saved by the Department of Public Property when Mayor Street shut down the Office of Arts and Culture in 2004. The OACCE must ensure not only that Public Property continues to support the Public Art Division, but that it finds a viable and long-term solution to funding, empowering and utilizing this important agency.

[section continued on page 40]



LEFT ABOVE: A city employee stands next to his work at an Art in City Hall exhibition.

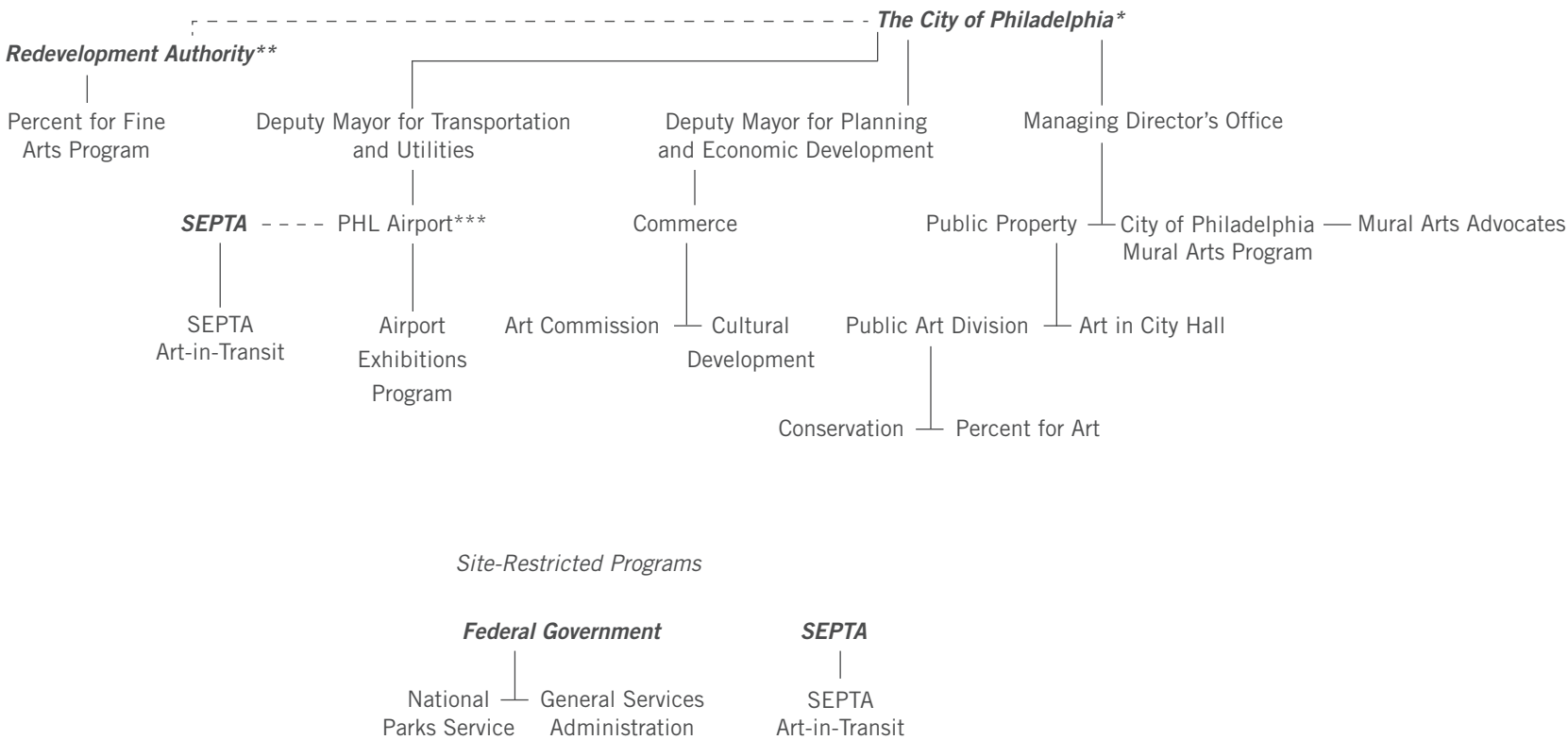


LEFT BELOW: *Re-Creation*, installed at the Dorothy Emmanuel Recreation Center in West Oake Lane as part of the city's Percent for Art Program.



PUBLIC ART IN PHILADELPHIA

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART  
BEFORE OACCE LEADERSHIP



NOTE: Horizontal lines are used to show connection of multiple agencies to the department directly above, not to show dependency with other organizations on the same line.

\*This chart reflects the distribution of arts officers in city government before the reconstitution of the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy. Omitted from this chart is the Cultural Fund, a nonprofit organization that receives funding from the General Fund to distribute grants to arts organizations.

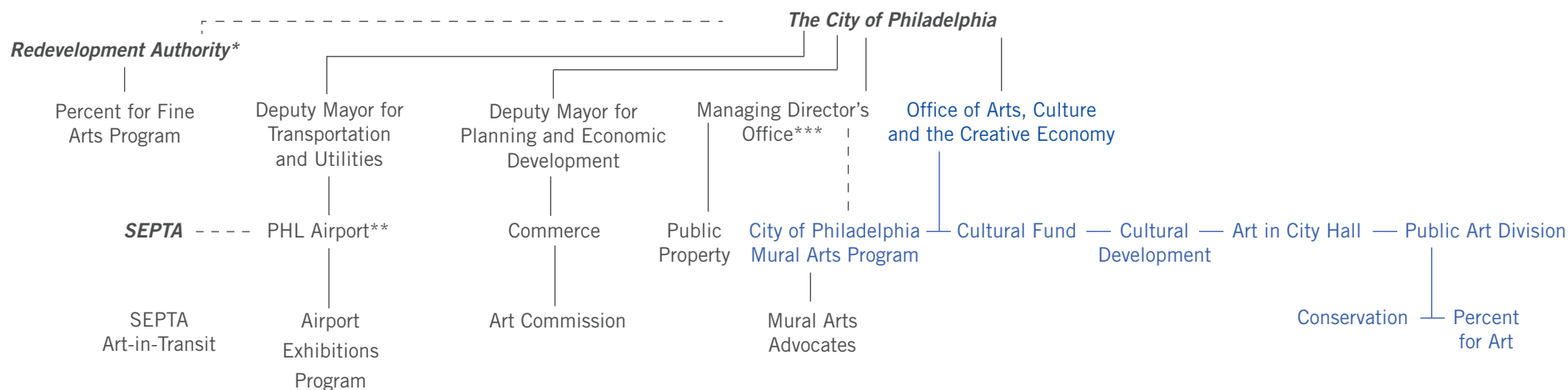
\*\*Though the RDA was created by the state, city government holds significant authority, with the executive director and board members mayor appointees.

\*\*\*Though airport personnel now report to Deputy Mayor of Transportation and Utilities Rina Cutler, the Aviation Fund is financed by airlines and is kept under the deputy mayor for planning and economic development (currently Alan Greenberger) in the FY2009 budget. No tax dollars are used for the exhibitions program.

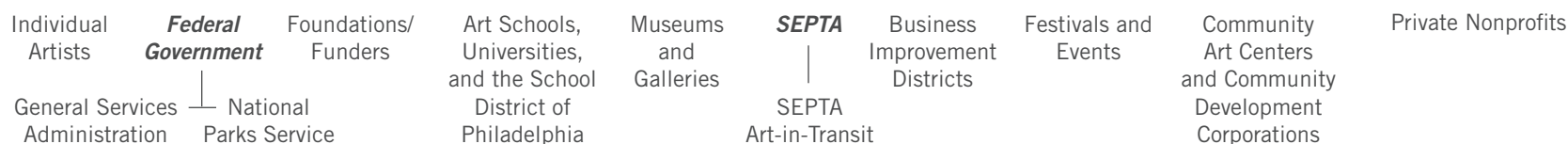


## PUBLIC ART IN PHILADELPHIA

### ORGANIZATIONAL CHART UNDER NEW OACCE LEADERSHIP



*Other Programs for the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy to Assist, Partner With, and Coordinate*



NOTE: Horizontal lines are used to show connection of multiple agencies to the department directly above, not to show dependency with other organizations on the same line.

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\*\*\*The Managing Director's Office will still provide technical capacity for Mural Arts Program staff, though the OACCE will have programmatic leadership and oversight.

*Cultural Development (Formerly under City of Philadelphia Department of Commerce)*

Within the Commerce Department, there is a manager of cultural development who is a primary contact between city government and the arts and culture community, a liaison between artists and businesses, and who works on resource development for artists and attracting creative businesses to Philadelphia. While limited in resources, this position demonstrates that arts and culture play a valuable role in neighborhood and economic development. Establishing robust resource development within the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy is essential.

RIGHT ABOVE:  
The “... Or Does it Explode?” collaboration between the Mural Arts Program and artist Dread Scott that depicts 12 Philadelphia youth in coffin-like structures outside the Free Library’s Central Branch.



RIGHT BELOW: The Mural Art Program’s 3,000th mural, a dedication to the Tuskegee Airmen, at 39th and Chestnut Streets in West Philadelphia.



*Mural Arts Program*

The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program links arts education and art-making to social services by working in schools, neighborhoods and prisons across the city to create murals that engage the community. MAP’s primary function is mural commissioning, and for most of its 25 years, it has worked in at-risk communities. It also provides a range of arts programming for youth, instruction programs for incarcerated youth and adults, and tours and publications that promote its projects. Funded by the city as a social service program, the Mural Arts Program is a hybrid organization, with city government employees as well as a nonprofit arm, Mural Arts Advocates. Since 1984, MAP has produced 3,000 murals (about 1,600 of which are extant), educated more than 2,000 youth per year, and employed 300 artists. Under the new organization of the OACCE, Mural Arts will report programmatically to the chief cultural officer while its city staff budget will remain within the Managing Director’s Office. MAP has achieved substantial success in its anti-graffiti, arts education and community building work, but some question its future role in public art in Philadelphia. Its historic dedication to a single art form has led some to ask if Philadelphia has reached a mural saturation point. At the same time, MAP has grown beyond its original mission of arts education for at-risk youth into a multi-faceted organization that creates non-mural public art. The process for how MAP projects are chosen now falls under the oversight of the chief cultural officer. Questions have also been raised about the need for a plan for mural removal or conservation, and about the Janus-faced nature of murals as symbols of both revitalization and blight.

### *Philadelphia Cultural Fund*

Though it is not an art-administering organization, the Cultural Fund is important to note because it is the primary way that the city distributes funding to arts organizations. The Cultural Fund is a nonprofit that allocates a portion of the General Fund each year as grants for local arts groups (many of which do public art projects), ranging from \$250 to \$17,000. Questions remain about opportunities to expand the Cultural Fund, an independent organization and board, as grants currently fund only operating support as opposed to projects. Also, though Philadelphia is the only major city to increase its funding for art organizations in this time of economic downturn (\$3 million annually, up from \$500,000 in 1991), the fund is still somewhat low relative to comparable cities.

## OTHER CITY GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

### *Philadelphia Art Commission*

The Art Commission serves as design review for city projects, reviewing the building, site design and the Percent for Art requirement for any project on city-owned property, any project partially financed by the city, or encroachments into or over the public right-of-way. Neither under the OACCE nor the Planning Commission, the lone Art Commission staffer has no supervision and must review more than 200 projects annually (most of which are signage encroachments). Questions have been raised about the purpose of the commission, its ability to enforce its decisions, and which projects it reviews, especially in light of the Design Review Committee recently proposed by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Furthermore,

commission recommendations regarding public art are often overlooked due to time and budget constraints, because city agencies are often already working on construction documents by the time the Percent for Art process finishes. There is a need for greater communication and collaboration between the Art Commission, the city's Percent for Art Program and the Planning, Zoning Code and Historical commissions.

### *Philadelphia International Airport*

The airport is home to 10 pieces from the city's permanent art collection (administered by the city's Percent for Art Program) and also runs its own Exhibitions Program, which organizes and presents rotating exhibitions at 16 sites throughout



LEFT ABOVE: An exhibit called *Natural Cycle* by sculptor Lee Stotzel in Philadelphia International Airport's Terminal A.

LEFT BELOW: A sculpture exhibit by artist Shelley Spector in Philadelphia International Airport's Terminal D.



Philadelphia International Airport. The director of exhibitions also manages the airport's contributions to the city's Percent for Art Program. No city tax dollars are used to finance the Exhibitions Program.

#### STATE-ENABLED BUT LOCALLY GOVERNED

##### *Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority*

The RDA manages the first Percent for Fine Arts Program in the country, which requires no less than one percent of estimated construction costs for projects built on RDA land go toward commissioning original, site-specific public art. The program has been historically understaffed with staff salary funded by the RDA, while the art production and installation is financed by the developer. There are more than 450



RIGHT ABOVE: Ned Smythe's *World Park: Order and Perspectives*, a Redevelopment Authority percent for art project, at the corner of 12th and Filbert streets in Center City.

RIGHT BELOW: Art installed by SEPTA at Frankford Transportation Center during the station's renovation.



pieces in the RDA collection, but the Percent for Fine Arts Program struggled for support under recent mayoral administrations. The program now has the potential under new vocal and committed city leadership to become fully integrated into the planning and development process. Currently, many developers view the Percent for Fine Arts requirement as a bureaucratic stumbling block and staff time is often consumed with justifying the program, though developers interviewed agreed that it was a valuable addition to their projects. Educating the development community on the economic benefits of public art is essential. Exploring legislative options for decoupling funding for public art from specific sites would also enable the RDA to leverage funds that are not currently available for new forms of expression such as temporary installations and citywide initiatives. Creating a mechanism for cataloguing, conserving and de-accessioning, when necessary, the RDA's public art collection is critical.

#### REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

##### *Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority*

SEPTA administers the Art-in-Transit Program, which allocates up to one percent of the construction budget of selected stations for the design, fabrication and installation of permanent artwork. Aside from staff salary and a public art consultant hired to oversee projects, budgets are project-based. By 2010, SEPTA expects to have completed 20 public art projects through Art-in-Transit. However, risk management, maintenance and durability issues have an impact on the selection of materials in transit centers.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

### *General Services Administration*

GSA administers the Art in Architecture program, which commissions public art for new federal buildings by reserving a minimum of one-half of one percent of estimated construction costs for art, and a Fine Arts Program, which maintains its Fine Arts Collection of more than 17,000 pieces of public art around the country. The Art in Architecture program is active nationally but comprises only a small portion of Philadelphia public art projects.

### *National Park Service*

In terms of public art, the National Park Service provides a public art program that commissions art for national parks, and a Monument Research and Preservation Program that helps maintain their artworks in parks nationwide. Locally, the President's House Memorial is an upcoming project, but otherwise, work in Philadelphia is limited to Independence National Historical Park and the Ben Franklin memorial at the Franklin Institute.

## NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS DEDICATED PRIMARILY TO PUBLIC ART

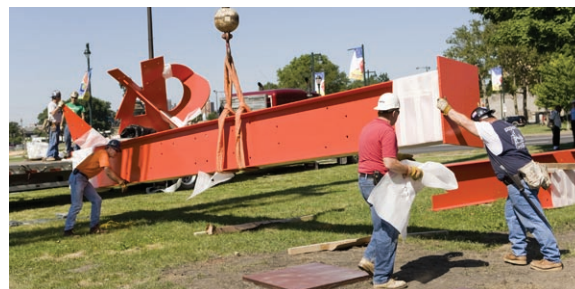
### *COSACOSA art at large, Inc.*

COSACOSA is a community-based arts organization in which artists work with neighborhood stakeholders to create new public art based on a civic engagement process specific to community concerns. The goal is to create parity among people of diverse backgrounds and differing abilities through the art-visioning and art-making process. COSACOSA's *Healing Art Project*,

recognized as a best practice by the National Endowment for the Arts, is unique in creating public art projects for Philadelphia healthcare environments with patients and other community constituents. COSACOSA is funded primarily through government grants and private foundations. In the past 20 years, COSACOSA brought together thousands of citizens from more than 30 Philadelphia neighborhoods to create site-specific public art.

### *Fairmount Park Art Association (FPAA)*

FPAA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to integrate public art and urban planning by commissioning, interpreting, preserving and advocating for public art in Philadelphia. Its projects



LEFT ABOVE: A mosaic created by COSACOSA as part of its *Healing Art Project*.

LEFT BELOW: Installation of Mark di Suvero's *Iroquois* at 24th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in 2007.

include working with communities and city agencies to place public art, collecting and making information on Philadelphia public art accessible, and running a maintenance program that preserves about 30 sculptures annually. FPAA is funded primarily through government grants, private foundations and an endowment. One of its main goals is to help create programs and initiatives that serve as models and best practices for other organizations locally and nationally. One such project, a series of public art audio programs for the sculptures along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, recently received a \$200,000 grant from Pew's Heritage Philadelphia Program.<sup>26</sup>

### *NetworkArts*

NetworkArts hires artists to lead programs for students that combine environmental education and art, typically culminating in a public mosaic that is displayed at the school as an educational tool itself. Students do the initial visioning and some of the actual mosaic construction, and NetworkArts staff refine and finish the project. Most of NetworkArts' funding comes from small local foundations as well as corporate sponsorship, which is used to complete eight to 11 projects per year. In more than 15 years, NetworkArts has served more than 50,000 Philadelphia children and created more than 200 educational mosaics in the sciences, humanities and intergenerational programs.

### *Village of Arts and Humanities*

The Village of Arts and Humanities' mission works in challenged North Philadelphia neighborhoods to build increased community investment through arts, educational, and economic and youth development programs. It is best known for the Building through the Arts program, which has created "art parks" and gardens out of vacant land. The Village maintains 12 art parks, an after-school program, and 1.1 million square feet of vacant land in North Philadelphia. The Village is currently led by Elizabeth Grimaldi, who replaced Kumani Gantt in July 2009.



RIGHT ABOVE: A NetworkArts mosaic at W.B. Saul High School in Northwest Philadelphia.

RIGHT BELOW: Ile Ife Park, one of the "art parks" created and maintained by the Village of Arts and Humanities.





## EXAMPLES OF OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ART

While the above represent the primary programs that administer and execute public art projects in Philadelphia, there are dozens of other groups (both formal and informal) that have contributed to the Philadelphia public art environment as part of their work. Some work in partnership with public art agencies, while others represent the type of grassroots innovation that the new Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy hopes to support and influence in order to ensure Philadelphia's viability as a creative hub. Many of these organizations do not adhere to the traditional definition that public art has to be a permanent piece of visual art in our public spaces. In fact, there are examples of dynamic projects going on

in Philadelphia that are pushing the city to think bigger and more broadly about public art not even done by trained artists. Further, there are numerous art schools that have organized public art projects, civic associations and community development corporations that launch public art projects as a neighborhood redevelopment strategy, private developers who have included public art in their work without being legislated to do so, and individuals who have sought out public canvasses on their own — all of these efforts deserve recognition.

More detailed descriptions of many of these organizations can be found in the Appendix of this document.



LEFT: Tomie Arai's *Swirl* wood and silkscreen project from *Chinatown In/flux*, a temporary art exhibition by the Asian Arts Initiative that celebrates Chinese history and describes the evolution of the Chinatown neighborhood in Philadelphia.

BELOW: *Your Move*, a series of larger-than-life game pieces scattered across the Municipal Services Building plaza. Since the work's installation, many pieces have been removed due to safety hazards, and much money has been spent on its maintenance, making it a challenge for the Department of Public Property.

## DISCUSSION

The vast array of art forms in the public environment and the various legislative requirements in place in Philadelphia have made the city a model for other cities seeking to establish or improve their public art programs. We are home to the nation's first public art nonprofit organization, the country's first two percent-for-art ordinances, and a city/nonprofit hybrid program that integrates murals with social services and arts education. Thanks to this variety of programs, public art is located not just in the downtown area, but all over the city. We have classic war monuments in Fairmount Park, nationally known landmarks in Center City, modern sculpture on our university campuses, and murals and art parks in our most challenged neighborhoods.

**Our success does not mean that Philadelphia cannot build upon the quality, visibility and strategic intent of its public art collection.** Mayor Nutter's commitment to the arts with his opening of the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy signals the importance and relevance of public art to the public life and economy of Philadelphia. The appointment of Gary Steuer as chief cultural officer and a member of the mayor's cabinet gives Philadelphia the opportunity to reflect on how best to leverage this new position and build upon our current public art assets.

**The current collection is invaluable and represents the great diversity of the city and its history.** Philadelphians should be proud of a collection that includes traditional public art that dates back to the 19th century as well as the newer art forms sprouting up on blank walls and under bridges across the city. What is perhaps most impressive about Philadelphia public art is that many of these initiatives developed organically and independently, showing the great energy in this city for art that is accessible to all. **However, because these programs developed individually, the current public art landscape is one that is often fragmented, divided among organizations and constrained by funding pressures.** This fractured structure of public art organizations in Philadelphia today hinders our ability to achieve greater things. The average resident or visitor does not know or care which organization commissions a work of art. What matters is that art speaks to them and has an impact on them. Developing a cogent strategy for public art that both preserves and conserves the best of the past while enabling cutting-edge art to flourish should be a goal. Philadelphia once led the nation in many areas of





public art, but it has fallen behind the times in keeping its processes up to date.

This is not an issue unique to the public art world, nor is it one that is surprising. The public art environment has been a factionalized collection of organizations and administrators (government and nonprofit alike) working without guidance from high-level city leadership or a unified plan or vision that incorporates their expertise. Current public art policy and practices both parallel and reflect post-World War II urban trends that include the impact of decades of governmental neglect; a shrinking tax base; deindustrialization; depopulation; significant socioeconomic, cultural and demographic shifts; and a tendency toward the privatization of the public realm. That Philadelphia has produced the volume and quality of public art that it has in this period is significant.

Funding for public art in Philadelphia is a challenge. The Cultural Fund remains a source for the equitable distribution of funds to support the arts, but grants are typically small and focus more on organizational capacity than on projects. While the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy currently does not have a budget, many believe it is Mayor Nutter's intention to make the OACCE freestanding with its own budget. However, in the current budget climate, there is not likely to be funding for an office until FY2011 at the earliest. Therefore, organizational recommendations for the office can be established now that will enable the OACCE to play a much more prominent role as a facilitator for public art projects that advance the administration's strategic economic development, placemaking, population growth and sustainability goals. Furthermore, with the federal

government reinvesting in the nation's cities through the Obama administration's federal recovery programs, there is an opportunity for Philadelphia to coordinate its public art strategy with federal funding tied to transformative investments in Philadelphia's infrastructure.

City government has been constrained both fiscally and legislatively to maintain and enhance its public art collection. The Department of Public Property supports the city's Public Art Division, but it is also responsible for maintaining all of the city's real estate and infrastructure, much of which is challenged and decaying. As a result, there is little room in the capital budget for public art upkeep beyond pieces so worn down that they present direct safety hazards to the public. Finding resources to maintain public art

**BELOW:** Emmanuel Frémiet's *Joan of Arc* sculpture when it was removed from its site at 25th Street and Kelly Drive in July 2009 to be restored. The Public Art Division was able to secure conservation funding from private sources.





outside of the Fairmount Park Art Association's jurisdiction is difficult. Furthermore, since 1959, other cities, such as Los Angeles, have expanded their percent-for-art legislation to allow for broader initiatives in addition to just site-specific art. Philadelphia's ordinances are outdated and require a reexamination of purpose tied to a contemporary understanding of the role of art in community revitalization, placemaking and economic development.

Government has faced increased pressure to focus on economic development, often at the cost of public amenities and civic design. The RDA program, once a national model, is an example of this. The original intent of the Percent for Fine Arts Program was to ensure artistic expression in urban renewal projects

that might otherwise be monotonous with the belief that beauty increased people's productivity. Yet the program has become mired in bureaucracy and politics under recent mayoral administrations. Despite the fact that developers receive government subsidies to develop their projects on land acquired by the city for redevelopment and that the developers are legally bound to include the art in their development projects, the RDA Percent for Fine Arts director must often spend a significant amount of time justifying the value of the state-mandated public art program to developers. Additionally, even when the art is commissioned and installed, many owners do not maintain the art, though the RDA contract requires the property owner to do so according to certain standards outlined by the artist. The RDA, like the city, is left

RIGHT: *Open Air Aquarium*, a series of fish sculptures commissioned for the entrance of Dockside Apartments along the Delaware River as part of the RDA One Percent for Fine Arts Program. This was one instance in which the RDA had to press hard to ensure the developer complied with the one percent requirement.





with a percent ordinance that is an outdated legislative construct. Its site-specific emphasis leaves the RDA with many small projects but with few recent iconic artworks. It has limited resources to enforce legislation that requires both the commissioning and maintenance of its artwork and it is not equipped to de-accession artworks should building ownership change.

Furthermore, the lack of integration and collaboration between and across public art agencies and programs limits the impacts of the resources that do exist for such projects. Artists are rarely involved early in the design process for either city or RDA projects, and the city's contracting process is often too cumbersome for artists to navigate. Without an outreach strategy or a central office available for those



LEFT ABOVE: *Spiral Ears* by Ming Fay, installed at the Criminal Justice Center in 1992, one of numerous installations commissioned as part of the city's percent for art program.

LEFT BELOW: George Sugarman's *Wall Reliefs* on the side of the parking garage across the street from the Wills Eye Institute earlier this year. The RDA recently reached an agreement with Jefferson to restore the reliefs, which should be complete in October 2009.

not in the official public art world, opportunities to expand and pursue new partnerships are limited. Public and private programs alike are understaffed, and as a result, public art opportunities often fall by the wayside. The new connection between the OACCE and the Mural Arts Program presents an opportunity to think about how MAP's technical, outreach, promotional and staff capacity might be utilized to further the goals of the office with public art forums, resource sharing, technical assistance, temporary art installations and more.

Many have observed that if the administration does not show support for public art, then the city's percent requirement becomes negotiable, or agencies do the bare minimum in order to get Art Commission approval. There are significant discrepancies in oversight in the commissioning, selection and creation of public art in Philadelphia. The Art Commission is the only official public art approval body in the city. However, its name, the Philadelphia Art Commission, is misleading as it reviews only certain publicly owned or financed projects and is, in actuality, more civic site design review than art jury. For example, its specific regulations mean that most Mural Arts Program projects are not reviewed by the Art Commission since they are simply painted on flat walls and do not encroach into the public right-of-way. Each public art organization has its own systems of juries and committees that review its own work, which can create inconsistencies, redundancies and inefficiencies. Some professionals interviewed described many jury processes as being limited in terms of the artists they solicited and unwilling to look beyond a predetermined pool of aesthetic talent.

**Up until now, city government has not had the vision or**

**the organization to use public art at the center of a sophisticated strategy for the future economic, social and cultural health of Philadelphia.** This is not to say that there have not been many successes — there have been. The Mural Arts Program's success in curbing the spread of graffiti and engaging at-risk youth through art-making is an international model; the important acquisition of landmark pieces such as Mark Di Suvero's *Iroquois* on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway by the Fairmount Park Art Association adds to Philadelphia's illustrious inventory; and the RDA's recent installation of Dennis Oppenheim's *Wave Forms* is a significant work of public art tied to urban redevelopment and placemaking — all are indeed best practices. Where we currently struggle, however, is in establishing a coordinated approach to public-art making that both celebrates the great variety that is Philadelphia's public art collection *and* leverages the necessary funds for ongoing commissioning, installation and conservation of great works.

**It is time to make the case for public art in Philadelphia that is tied to a strategic vision for public art, economic development and neighborhood revitalization.**