



GREATER PHILADELPHIA AREA DOCENT CONSORTIUM

GPADC Fall Meeting / Mural Arts of Philadelphia Virtual Tour

October 6, 2020 via Zoom

59 Participants from 25 organizations.

Welcome

GPADC Opening Remarks. GPADC Chair Anna Hadgis welcomed all participants, from 25 of our member institutions, to the first GPADC virtual program, presented in collaboration with Mural Arts Philadelphia. She thanked MAP staff and docents for providing us with this program. It highlights their mission and vision for all communities in the neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia.

Anna noted that we last met in person in February when we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the GPADC. She hoped that in the spring of 2021 we will meet again in person at one of our member institutions, preferably outdoors. Anna declared that GPADC is only as strong as our members. She wants it to be a vehicle for your voices so please connect with us via our new and improved web site. We would love to program with smaller institutions that cannot provide a venue big enough to host us.

She then thanked past Steering Committee members and volunteers who provided us with such interactive programs during their tenure.

- Kathy Kenney, Donna Samuel, and Alisa Rashid (members at large)
- Kerry Bryan (Secretary)
- Judy Zipkin-Grasso (Treasurer)
- Bonnie Brown, Janet Krevenas, Ellen Semple (past Chairs)
- Barbara Moll (Chair) who increased membership to 36 and organized programs at The Mutter, The Union League, Tyler Arboretum, as well as Crossroads, held at The Michener Museum in November 2019. She asked all to raise their cup of tea or coffee to these volunteers who worked tirelessly to bring us together for in person dialogues and docent/guide sharing.

Anna introduced Ellen Soloff, the Director of Tours and Merchandise for Mural Arts Philadelphia (MAP).

MAP Opening Remarks. Ellen Soloff welcomed everyone. She has worked at MAP for seven years. The MAP is the nation's largest public art organization. For thirty-five years, it has fostered a collaborative art process, with 60-100 projects each year. Essentially, MAP is the world's largest outdoor art gallery and makes Philadelphia the mural capital of the world! She

explained that today's program would showcase 14 murals produced in the last three years and sited in a variety of Philadelphia neighborhoods.

Ellen introduced Michael Rieder, our tour guide for today's virtual program. She praised Michael as a wonderful MAP guide for the past four years and noted that he had helped to create this virtual tour. Participants were asked to use the "Chat" or "Q & A" features of Zoom for any questions or comments.

Program

MAP Virtual Tour presented by Michael Rieder. Michael gave us a richly detailed virtual tour of a selection of murals in Center City, Kensington and North, South and West Philadelphia. For each, Michael provided the title of the mural, the name(s) of the maker(s), the date, the method of production, a description of the community involvement and a discussion of each mural's potential meanings. Michael kindly provided his notes for the program. The images for all of the murals discussed in the outline below can be found at www.muralarts.org.

Introduction

- 1984... originally titled the Anti-Graffiti Network
- Wilson Goode Mayor of Philadelphia hires Jane Golden to help run program
- 1986...renamed Mural Arts (MAP), becomes a department of city government
- created approximately 4200 murals since 1984
- estimated that 2600 still exist. Create 50-100 new projects per year
- vision has expanded now including Art Education, Restorative Justice , and Porchlight (assists people with behavioral issues). Note: See www.Muralarts.org for more information
- today will examine 14 murals created in last several years, focusing on several geographic areas, highlighting influence of the three above mentioned programs. All these murals can be viewed on the MAP website
- conclude by mentioning MAP initiatives during COVID-19 crisis
- ART IGNITES CHANGE....MAP mantra

NORTH PHILADELPHIA

- *Everything the Light Touches Creates a Humble Moment*
2019 Brad Carney ..Teaching Artist...Art Education project...worked with 3 classes of high school students at the U School...STEAM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Art/Math) project... idea→ how one responds to emotional content of one's environment (i.e., stresses, joy, social issues) can influence one's behavioral patterns and help optimize outcome...
- *Sanctuary City, Sanctuary Neighborhood*

2019 Betsy Casanas & Ian Pierce...worked with Guild members (part of Restorative Justice)...located in immigrant community....residents mainly from Puerto Rico, Central and South America...theme->resilience and strength of immigrant community...painted on two walls of Providence Center(organization that addresses needs of community, i.e.. Family retreats, prayer groups, teaching English as second language)...murals depict powerful women leading people on pilgrimage to US and opening barriers to entry...contains symbols and references to Yoruba tradition/religion of Nigeria

* *Still Life*

2018 Philip Adams, Barnes Foundation, State Correctional Institute at Graterford...Restorative Justice program...theme→ devastating effect of incarceration on life and future ...unusual subject matter for MAP work, since still life is genre popularized in 17th century Holland....MAP murals typically modern, abstract, edgy, controversial, etc. A still life was chosen to demonstrate how those incarcerated feel about their lives→ frozen in time, frozen potential, stolen time

WEST PHILADELPHIA

- *Our Wayfinders*

2019 Eric Okdeh....Porchlight project...theme→ journey through life and how we can assist others....featured person is woman with eyes closed...? Contemplating the future? meditating? looking inward for strength? cairns are repeated through composition→rock piles constructed by travelers to guide those that follow...life affirming poem written by workshop participant to inspire viewers....

- *The Silent Watcher*

2019 Faith XLVII ...internationally known street artist from South Africa, has created works in 39 countries... 175 feet high, on University Square Senior Community Center... a visual landmark/gateway between University City and West Philadelphia...strong Madonna-like woman gazing down at viewers...watching over community....benevolent, compassionate, calm...a guardian...Philadelphia Maneto→"let brotherly love endure"

- *Ed Bradley*

2017 Ernel Martinez...worked with Phila Association of Black Journalists...Ed Bradley born and raised in West Phila...attended Cheyney State College (oldest of the Historically Black Colleges or Universities)....earned degree in education...started career as Phila public school teacher...volunteered at local FM radio station, WDAS....after three years got full time job at CBS radio station in NYC, WCBS...launched career in journalism....traveled world....26 years of award winning work on 60 Minutes...received 19 Emmys...first Black American journalist to cover White House....mural→ Bradley portrait, small vignettes of Ed with world leaders he met and befriended during career

SOUTH PHILADELPHIA

- *Convergence*
2019 Rebecca Rutstein ...has been artist in residence in Iceland, Hawaii, Canadian Rockies...traveled as artist on ocean going research vessels...theme → mural meditation on Schuylkill River ...inspired by energetic intersection of cultures and means of transportation (river, railroads, trails, roads, bridges)...bold, uplifting, dynamic....two walls comprised of linear design to reflect transportation concept...third wall of bright geometric color as symbolic reference to annual African Odunde Festival held in this area....honors African diaspora, derived from Yoruba people to celebrate New Year
- *Parts Per Million*
2018 Ben Volta...Art Education....STEAM project based learning...mural title is the way CO2 is measured in the atmosphere....classroom discussion involved how human activity effects climate change....mural based upon research, data, graphs , designs learned...mural also reflects school diversity where 27 different languages are spoken....mural on three walls of building...shows spirals, spherical temperature map of earth, satellites orbiting earth, flags of countries of students ancestors

CENTER CITY

* *Industrious Light—Baldwin Locomotive Works*

2019 Philip Adams ...historical mural....theme → sixth in the artist's series that honors Philadelphia's industrial past, when the city was known as the "workshop of the world" ...Baldwin Locomotive works founded in 1835 @ Broad and Hamilton Streets. Occupied 7 entire city blocks...employed 15,000 workers....made steam locomotives sent worldwide....locomotive depicted in mural is 60000 model (the Tesla of its day)....an actual 60000 is on display at the Franklin Institute...black and white locomotive approaches colorful flowers and grasses in foreground, suggesting the park that occupies site of old factory...? Repurposing/preserving railroads as has occurred east of Broad Street at former Reading Line now site of Rail Park

- *Folding the Prism*
2019 Jessie Unterhalter and Katy Truhn...Baltimore based artists who "explore themes of movement and symmetry, inspired by bold color combinations, patterns in nature and woven textiles" ...part of Restorative Justice program...on six story building in Spring Garden area, former site of major textile production....artist "strive to transform public space into playful and vibrant experiences" ...large, jubilant mural is a splash of color in surrounding drab industrial area

* *Philadelphia Microcosm*

2019 Jon Laidacker...partnership with MAP, SEPTA, Reading Terminal Market(RTM)...at RTM entry into Jefferson Station of SEPTA...loose timeline of RTM from 1890's to present...parallels the growth of Philadelphia....mural progresses from black and white

to increasing color as image advances into the future....RTM is second most visited tourist attraction in city, after Independence Mall area

- *Untitled*
2019 Amy Sherald....Art Education...artist painted official portrait of Michele Obama...artist paints “everyday people doing everyday things” ...teenager depicted in mural worked with Sherald on the project...depicts humanity , dignity of her subjects...democratizes art→ ?does someone have to have an important public persona to be depicted in a mural, or statue, or monument...challenges ideas about identity and importance...a critique on historical Black representation....

KENSINGTON

- *Healing Begins Through Connection*
2018 Swoon...NYC based artist...Porchlight program....held workshops for people suffering from trauma, addiction, and other behavioral issues at MAP Kensington Store Front...mural shows portraits of people involved with workshop, or volunteers, or neighborhood residents...emphasis is on humanity of people...multicolored arc-like background suggestive of rainbow, ? brighter future

**Resilience*

2018 Parris Stancell...Porchlight...theme→ women’s importance and resilience in a community...bright, colorful composition...could be perceived as an altarpiece→central stage with bracketing arched windows suggesting a house of worship...central image of woman, unusual head position→ ?in pain ? seeking guidance ? Asking for help? Assisting woman on right...needy youth left....flowers, music, harlequin themes

MAP initiatives in response to COVID-19. These can be seen on MAP website

- Handmade face masks
- Space pads: decorative vinyl floor tiles to be installed in stores.... 6 feet apart to encourage social distancing
- Hope medallion: inspirational wall mountings for building exteriors
- Store front artwork initiatives
- Color Me Back→same day work and pay murals painted in Suburban Station passageway...painting support columns in Broad Street subway
- Homeschool with Mural Arts

At the end of the presentation, Ellen thanked Michael and all the participants. She told us that in addition to virtual tours, the MAP is now conducting some walking tours.

Anna called for a standing ovation for Michael!

Questions & Answers

Ellen and Michael fielded questions from the audience. They said that many of the murals MAP commissions are open to all to participate. Information can be found on their website.

- They explained that because the local community helps to dictate the content and design, they sometimes suggest the appropriate artist. At other times, MAP chooses the artist.
- They said their main office at 1729 Mt. Vernon Street was the home of famed Philadelphia artist Thomas Eakins—but it is not open to the public and they do not offer tours of that space.
- MAP's funding comes from a variety of sources, including the City of Philadelphia, various foundations, corporations and individuals. They also started a consulting arm that helps other cities create successful mural programs.
- There is no age requirement for participating in mural production. Yes, there are many volunteer opportunities available. MAP is still taking volunteers now, but there are less opportunities during the pandemic.

Conclusion

Closing Remarks, Ellen Soloff. Ellen expressed her delight that MAP was invited to present GPADC's first virtual program. She expressed her gratitude to all the MAP volunteers for their continued efforts during this difficult time. She urged all the docents not to give up and to continue to aid their organizations in any way they could as it is much appreciated.

Closing Remarks, Anna Hadgis. Anna felt exhausted even though we did not walk through Philadelphia because all our senses were stimulated and so many connections were made with each of our cultural institutions. She thanked Michael for an incredible tour – filled not only with art but also with stories about the artists, history, social justice, pertinent issues and humanity.

She noted that the Penn Museum's new Africa Gallery showcases stories of Africans in the diaspora based on the same Yoruba and West African traditions seen in the El Barrio mural that Michael showed us. These themes are also found in the Penn Museum's Mexico and Central American gallery. Michael's virtual tour also reminded her of the struggles described in books like *American Dirt* by Jennine Cummings and *In the Midst of Winter* by Isabelle Allende. She asked all the participants to please share their resources on the GPADC web site.

Anna thanked Ellen Soloff for her leadership and Michael for all the research and preparation. She was sure we would all continue to discuss all that Michael brought to the fore!

Anna thanked all the participants and reminded everyone that our next general meeting will be February 9, 2021. It will be a virtual program presented by Eastern State Penitentiary.

Meeting Adjourned 11:30 AM

Next meeting: February 9, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Butterfield, Recording Secretary