

The Trentonian

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An art exhibition just a train ride away



By Tammy Duffy

The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program has launched a new enthusiastic public art project designed for the Northeast Corridor. The exhibition has been created by Berlin-based visual artist, Katharina Grosse. This installation is entitled, *Psychylustro*. The artwork has metamorphosed one of Philadelphia's major transportation thoroughfares with a series of seven bright, bold installations along the city's rail gateway between 30th Street and North Philadelphia stations.

This large-scale, site-specific public artwork, visible to passengers on Amtrak (traveling between Philadelphia and New York), SEPTA Regional Rail (Chestnut Hill West and Trenton lines) and New Jersey Transit (Atlantic City line), is a temporary installation that will transform over time as the elements reclaim the space. The work ranges from a vast, dramatic warehouse of walls to small buildings and stretches of green spaces, meant to be framed through the windows of the moving train, creating a real-time landscape painting that explores shifting scale, perspective and the passage of time. During the ride from Trenton you come up to the pieces at 30 minutes into your ride to Philadelphia.

Curator, Elizabeth Thomas was tasked by the Philadelphia Mural Arts program to work with artist Katarina Grosse to find a situation for her work to be seen in Philadelphia. The project's focus was to extend beyond the normal boundaries of the Mural Arts program. Elizabeth had to create a totalizing exhibition that was not bounded by the walls of a building. They wanted to demonstrate with the exhibition what abstraction can do in a public space versus representation.

Katarina Grosse came to Philadelphia and scouted areas with Ms. Thomas and the team from the Philadelphia Mural Arts program. The title of this exhibition was chosen by Katarina. She has a desire to choose titles that are not descriptive but evocative. She wants you to experience the psyche and imagination of the pieces. This installation is a landscape for the imagination. The artwork triggers an experience, sometimes shifting the actual experience around for the viewer.

The native Berlin artist, Katarina Grosse is very invested in how the presence of color and its vibrancy works for and against architecture. The boldness of her color choices creates a situation that allows for the color to compete or dissolve the architecture. She selected the colors for each passage based on the sounds that are created in each passage with the passing of the trains. It highlights the artificiality of the work in relationship to the surroundings in which it is in dialogue with. The color palette she has used in this exhibition is quite sublime.

At the Mural Arts program they are interested in looking at the arts in the 21st century. Jane Golden has led this wildly successful initiative for over 15 years. She understands that in order for their program to grow and be sustainable they must be inventive and innovative. They are focused on coming up with new ways to display art and working in public spaces. If an art program's focus is to keep the status quo, that is not a sustainable program. The Mural Arts Program is doing work that pushes the boundaries of what murals are and are not. They are working with a range of artists, how they define techniques. They also focus on who is getting represented and who is doing the representing.

Jane Golden also stated in a recent interview, "It is very important that a robust plan be rolled out every year. There needs to be a mix of traditional and non traditional works."

There were 7 Philadelphia artists that helped with the project. The Mural Arts program employs over 200 artists annually.

During the dedication there was spontaneous applause as they came upon the first piece. The pieces take you out of your train world. It's quite inspiring in a momentary way, it takes you to a different place. It was the best train ride ever. It's a stunningly stir of color that makes you think of art in a very different way. Some of the feelings people have felt while viewing the installation have been an element of surprise. You see color...you then go into your own world.....then into the industrial world.....then more color.

The installation is accompanied by a 3 track audio guide and a scholarly publication on the work and its installation, designed by Project. The audio guide has an original audio interpretation by sound artist, Jesse Kudler on one of the tracks. If you call **215- 525 1045**, you can hear the entire audio guide for the installation.

What's next for Mural Arts

The Mural Arts Program has some great things planned for the near future. Great Gateways and the Cities that Make Them,” will be a panel discussion moderated by Chris Satullo of WHYY’s NewsWorks, and organized by Philadelphia Mural Arts Program in conjunction with Katharina Grosse’s Psychylustro. **The panel will take place at the Philadelphia Center for Architecture. Admission is free, from 6-8pm at 1218 Arch Street in Philadelphia**

They will also be working with a Canadian artist collective in the fall. They are taking over a space on Lancaster Ave, near Drexel University. A collective of artists will congregate so that they can and will respond to the needs of people in the area, painting a community garden, painting a home, etc.

Other projects coming up are: In the fall of 2015, the Philly Mural Arts Program will host an international street art festival, they are also working with the Mayors transportation office on a project that is focused on the new bike share program, another program focused on a big tribute to Philadelphia d-jays, another large project with criminal justice system, entitled, Moving beyond the Walls and a project that will focus on community wellness; geared to community mental health and wellness.