

La Guardia's New Delta Terminal to be Defined by New York Artists

Six site-specific permanent artworks will celebrate the city's energy and diversity.



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Delta Air Lines's rebuilt Terminal C, expected to open this spring as one of the last big features of La Guardia Airport's \$8 billion transformation, will be defined by six new large-scale, site-specific permanent artworks.

"We want public art to be a significant part of the appeal, inspiration and sense of place at a major new civic facility," said Rick Cotton, the executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owns the airport.

The Port Authority, together with Gov. Kathy Hochul and Delta Air Lines, has partnered with the Queens Museum to commission Mariam Ghani, Rashid Johnson, Aliza Nisenbaum, Virginia Overton, Ronny Quevedo and Fred Wilson — all New York-based artists — to create installations throughout the arrivals and departures hall and associated concourse. The overall budget for Terminal C's art program is \$12 million.

"Delta really wanted us to think about Queens, the most diverse county in the U.S., and find a way to reflect that," said Sally Tallant, the president of the Queens Museum, a close neighbor to the airport. Tallant's team guided the selection of the six artists, chosen from an initial pool of several dozen.

Two monumental sculptures will hang in the terminal's atrium and be visible from the roadside, including an installation of starlight globes by Wilson, a Bronx-born MacArthur award winner, and a constellation of architectural skylights by Overton, a New York transplant from Tennessee. Ghani, a Brooklyn-born Afghan American, is referencing more than 80 languages spoken in the tristate area in her tiled wall installation, and Nisenbaum, a Mexican American, is painting a variety of Delta employees in a group portrait, to be translated into mosaic. Johnson, originally from Chicago, is also working in mosaic, making the largest grid of faces in his "Anxious Men" series to date. Quevedo, born in Ecuador, is reconfiguring and transposing a gymnasium floor and its vibrant game lines onto a wall.

The art in Terminal C joins a growing gallery of public works at La Guardia, including the 1942 mural "Flight" by the Works Progress Administration artist James Brooks in the Marine Air Terminal, and, unveiled in the new Terminal B in 2020, four installations by Jeppe Hein, Sabine Hornig, Laura Owens and Sarah Sze. Later this year, Richard Lippold's sculpture "Orpheus and Apollo," which hung for more than 50 years at Lincoln Center, will be relocated to La Guardia's Central Hall, currently under construction.

"It's going to be very exciting at LaGuardia to have a kind of art destination," Tallant said. "It speaks to the idea of building contemporary public space that celebrates the culture and the artists that make the city what it is."