

Ready When You Are, Terminal C Is Now an Art Destination

With the opening of Delta Air Lines's new terminal at La Guardia Airport, New York gets a distinctive new collection of public artworks.

By Hilarie M. Sheets June 1, 2022

When Delta Air Lines' Terminal C at La Guardia Airport opens to the public on Saturday, New York will get not only a gleaming new transportation hub but also a significant art destination. "Airports are gateways to a region — travelers should know where they are," said Rick Cotton, the executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates La Guardia. "Public art is at the core of that aspect of building a new civic structure."

Large-scale permanent installations by Mariam Ghani, Rashid Johnson, Aliza Nisenbaum, Virginia Overton, Ronny Quevedo and Fred Wilson — all artists living and working in New York — are poised to become new city landmarks throughout the terminal. The new works, commissioned by Delta Air Lines in partnership with the neighboring Queens Museum and part of a \$12 million art program in Terminal C, join a constellation of other projects at La Guardia.



On a wall of Delta's arrivals and departures hall, the artist Ronny Quevedo has mounted a full-scale wooden gym floor fabricated from scratch. Credit...Justin Kaneps for The New York Times

In Terminal B, four site-specific pieces by Jeppe Hein, Sabine Hornig, Laura Owens and Sarah Sze were commissioned by La Guardia Gateway Partners with the Public Art Fund in a \$10 million investment unveiled in 2020. A restored 1942 mural by James Brooks in Terminal A nods to the heyday of Works Progress Administration artists employed in the service of grand infrastructure projects. And a soaring 40-foot-high Richard Lippold sculpture, which hung at Lincoln Center for decades, will become the centerpiece of an atrium to be completed this year.

As the largest carrier in New York, employing 10,000 people in the area prepandemic (and now back up to over 9,000), Delta wanted the artworks in its terminal “to be New York-centric and reflect the diversity of our company,” said Ryan Marzullo, a managing director with the company who is overseeing the \$4 billion Terminal C project, now 80 percent finished.

For each of the six artists chosen by the Delta team from dozens initially presented by the Queens Museum, it’s been an opportunity to push their practices in terms of scale and experimentation, according to the museum’s president and executive director, Sally Tallant. “All these works are very rooted in what it means to live in New York,” she said.

Ronny Quevedo

For a decade, Ronny Quevedo has reconfigured gymnasium flooring to explore sites of convening and sport, which he views as especially important to immigrant communities. For the first time, the artist has fabricated a wooden gym floor at full scale and from scratch, now mounted on a wall of Delta’s arrivals and departures hall. Its brightly painted lines of play are fragmented and rearranged into a dynamic abstract composition.

“This urban environment we live in is always moving into new directions,” said Quevedo, who grew up in the Bronx and accompanied his father, who played professional soccer in Ecuador, to the games he refereed every weekend at schools and parks throughout the city. For the artist, the gymnasium flooring is an opportunity “to represent the multiple intersections and communities and different experiences one can get from New York,” he said, “and the role of play in developing one’s own identity.”

Within his reimagined floor diagram on Delta’s wall piece, Quevedo superimposed constellations of stars applied in layers of gold and silver leaf. “It’s a way of pairing that movement of migration with that movement of the cosmos,” he said. “This sense of struggle and resiliency is not just focusing on victimization but on re-envisioning oneself.”