



**Mural Arts Philadelphia**  
Semiquincentennial Projects | 2026

## Printmaking by the People



Now entering its culminating year, *Printmaking by the People* stands among Philadelphia's most ambitious artist-led America 250 initiatives. Since 2024, the project has hosted more than 50 public workshops across libraries, community centers, and neighborhood hubs, engaging thousands of residents in a central question: *What does freedom require today?* Each gathering blends civic conversation with hands-on printmaking, generating a growing body of work that reflects the concerns, aspirations, and lived experiences of Philadelphians. In April 2026, hundreds of these prints will come together in an exhibition at the Free Library, and in June, a major public mural will be unveiled, forming a citywide portrait of how people are thinking about democracy at a defining national moment.



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**Philadelphia Gateways**



*Philadelphia Gateways* is a bold citywide initiative from Mural Arts Philadelphia to transform how people enter and experience Philadelphia throughout the Spring through Fall of the nation's 250th anniversary. Supported by the City and the Funder's Collaborative and guided by a distinguished advisory group, the project will mark the city's entrances with monumental civic artworks, connect neighborhoods and cultural destinations through vibrant "colorway" corridors, and restore cherished murals so they shine anew. Together, these efforts will create a powerful visual identity for Philadelphia—one that honors our history, celebrates the vitality of our communities, and offers an inspiring welcome to residents and visitors alike.



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### Philly Music Legends, Spotlight 250: Questlove & Boyz II Men



In 2026, Mural Arts will unveil two major tributes to Philadelphia's cultural history: a new mural honoring Boyz II Men in South Philadelphia in May and a mural celebrating Questlove at West Philadelphia High School in October. Timed to the nation's 250th year, these projects shine a spotlight on musical artists whose work has shaped the city's identity and contributed to its global cultural reach. Each mural stands as a celebration of the creativity rooted in Philadelphia's neighborhoods and the enduring influence its artists have carried into the wider world.



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### LGBTQ+ Heroes



Former Mural at 12th & Locust Streets: *A Tribute to Gloria Casarez* © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Michelle Angela Ortiz, Briana Dawkins.

As the nation marks its 250th year, Philadelphia is honoring the LGBTQ+ leaders who shaped the city's civic and cultural life with a permanent mural at 1221 St. James Street. Created by Mural Arts Philadelphia with Voyeur Nightclub, the Washington Square West Civic Association, and the offices of Councilmembers Rue Landau and Mark Squilla, the project recognizes the activists, organizers, artists, and community builders whose work expanded rights, visibility, and safety across the city. Among them is Gloria Casarez—Philadelphia's first Director of LGBT Affairs—whose earlier mural became a touchstone for the community before it was lost to physical development. Restoring her presence alongside other trailblazers creates a public landmark that reflects the breadth of LGBTQ+ leadership in the city. At a moment when the country is reflecting on 250 years of its evolving democracy, the mural stands as a powerful reminder of the people who pushed Philadelphia toward greater equity and inclusion.



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## **Vámonos pa'l monte (Let's Go to the Mountains)**



Vámonos pa'l Monte, named after the classic song by Eddie Palmieri, is a participatory procession that transforms Philadelphia's streets into a living tribute to Puerto Rican culture, resilience, and the migration stories that shape communities across the diaspora. Conceived by acclaimed interdisciplinary artist Wanda Raimundi-Ortiz with costume designer Kristina Tollefson, and curated by Marángeli Mejía Rabell in partnership with Mural Arts Philadelphia, the project is rooted in more than a year of collaboration with residents, artists, and cultural leaders in Norris Square—a neighborhood long at the heart of the city's Puerto Rican life.

In October 2026, amid Philadelphia's Semi-Quincentennial, the procession travels four miles from City Hall to Norris Square, shifting the focus from Independence Hall to a community whose histories and traditions embody another vision of freedom. Along the route, Raimundi-Ortiz—a first-generation Puerto Rican American—performs in a custom wardrobe designed by Kristina Tollefson, adding and shedding layers that draw from Puerto Rico's landscapes, ecology, history, and regional motifs. At each gathering point, new participants and objects join the procession—items that hold personal and cultural meaning, carried forward through generations and reshaped by the experience of migration—until the community reaches “el monte,” the symbolic mountaintop at the heart of the celebration.

Vámonos pa'l Monte is more than a procession—it is a homecoming in motion, an offering of culture and remembrance, and an open invitation to walk together toward a shared future.



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**FloatLab**



Concept Images for *Floatlab* provided by Höweler & Yoon Architecture and Brick Visual

Opening in April 2026, FloatLab is a first-in-the-nation floating classroom and civic platform on the tidal Schuylkill River—anchored at Bartram’s Mile alongside wetlands and lands long connected to Lenape history. Designed by Höweler + Yoon in collaboration with Mural Arts Philadelphia, Bartram’s Garden, and a multidisciplinary team of artists, architects, marine engineers, and ecologists, FloatLab demonstrates how thoughtful, cross-sector collaboration can create public spaces that foster learning, connection, and engagement with the environment.

As the nation marks its 250th year, FloatLab offers a space to engage—directly and physically—with the river, and to practice the civic habits a shared future requires: curiosity, stewardship, and access to knowledge and nature. Its sloped, accessible walkway brings visitors to the river’s surface, where science, art, and observation converge in real time. In a moment shaped by environmental uncertainty and civic fragmentation, FloatLab holds open space for connection—between people, disciplines, and the living systems that sustain us.



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### Heart of Kensington



Artist Katie Brown and community members installing crochet work at the *Garden Mural*, Stop the Risk site on Kensington Avenue, August 2, 2023. Photo by Steve Weinik for Mural Arts Philadelphia.

As the nation marks its 250th year, the *Heart of Kensington Creates* initiative places one of Philadelphia's most misunderstood neighborhoods squarely within the country's broader story. In partnership with Councilwoman Quetcy Lozada, Mural Arts and Impact Services are launching a 15-month effort that uses public art to highlight Kensington's resilience, creativity, and community leadership at a moment of national reflection. The project will establish a new cultural anchor along Kensington Avenue and throughout the Frankford community through 6 large-scale murals, a series of 6 permanent and temporary installations with local businesses and gardens, and smaller neighborhood projects that create a unified visual presence across District 7. As Philadelphia prepares for increased national attention in 2026, Heart of Kensington Creates offers a community-centered portrait that affirms the neighborhood's essential place in the city's past, present, and future.



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**Public Works, 2026**



Karyn Olivier. Photo by: Ryan Collerd

Commissioned by Forman Arts Initiative and Mural Arts Philadelphia, in partnership with the Free Library of Philadelphia, Karyn Olivier's *Public Works* residency brings an internationally recognized artist into the inner workings of one of the city's most vital public institutions. As the nation marks its 250th year, the project highlights the public library as a cornerstone of American civic life—an engine of access, learning, and community connection. Through months of research with librarians, staff, and patrons, Olivier will develop a temporary public artwork for Fall 2026 that reflects the challenges and possibilities facing libraries today. In a milestone year for the country, *Public Works* invites Philadelphians to consider how public institutions support a functioning democracy and how they can evolve to meet the needs of the next generation.