

Forman
Arts
Initiative



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**FORMAN ARTS INITIATIVE AND MURAL ARTS PARTNER TO CREATE *PUBLIC WORKS*, A
NEW ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM PAIRING ARTISTS WITH PHILADELPHIA
PUBLIC AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS**

**WITH PUBLIC PROGRAMMING BEGINNING IN JUNE 2023, *PUBLIC WORKS* DEBUTS
WITH INAUGURAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN SEPTA AND ANULA SHETTY, FIRST
ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**



Philadelphia, PA, (April 6, 2023) – Forman Arts Initiative (FAI) and Mural Arts are pleased to announce **Public Works**, a residency program that places artists in Philadelphia government agencies or organizations to develop artwork that forges new connections between the agency’s work and the communities they serve. Public Works is driven by the conviction that public art has the power to inspire real, positive public change and foster public spaces that are beneficial to all. It seeks to deepen the exchanges between community and institution, provide meaningful opportunities for artists, and give a voice to underrepresented constituents. For the program’s inaugural year, Public Works has selected Philadelphia artist **Anula Shetty**, who will work with the **Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)** to develop a project designed to inspire positive human connection through shared transit experiences.

Public Works brings Philadelphia into a forward-looking network of cities nationwide with similar residency models, including New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, which have all recognized the importance of centering artists' voices in civic discourse. Like these models, Public Works hopes, through increasing the opportunities for institutions and the public to connect, to empower individuals to participate substantially in shaping their shared future alongside government agencies and organizations. Public Works is an unprecedented opportunity for art and artists to reach countless Philadelphians by meeting them during the everyday course of their lives and, through art, providing a sense of discovery, surprise, and even levity to otherwise uneventful experiences.

“By bringing together the creative spirit of artists and the impactful reach of local organizations and Philadelphians government agencies, we’re thrilled to establish Public Works, which will activate public art in all its forms as a tool to shed light on social issues and add to the vibrancy of our city,” says Michael Forman, co-founder of Forman Arts Initiative.

FAI co-founder Jennifer Rice adds, “Forman Arts Initiative is deeply committed to creating new opportunities for artists that offer, in addition to monetary support, avenues for increased connectivity with the public. We are excited to bring relevant, vital art into the lives of the individuals and organizations who work tirelessly to make Philadelphia such a special place.”

Public Works is designed as an artists’ residency that, each year, embeds an artist in the host organization. The program will facilitate the creation of visible and thoughtful public art to provide opportunities to encounter and experience art as a daily routine and enhance the art and culture scene in Philadelphia. Each artist in residence will have demonstrated an active practice of creating public art that foregrounds accessibility and social engagement. Artists selected for the residency will receive an award of \$40,000, along with a generous production budget and expert project support from FAI, Mural Arts, and SEPTA.

“Over 30 years, the Mural Arts program has come to understand how an artistic process can shape our thinking about place and how a public art project can reframe issues and generate community,” says Jane Golden, Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia. “Through placing artists in close proximity to city departments and agencies, we get to see, first hand, how art can be part of something that goes beyond public space to that of public action. Centering the arts within the context of our city's issues can lead to social transformation and change. This is why I am so thrilled about Public Works and this collaboration with FAI, an organization that is deeply committed to this project and to the artists of the city.”

In January of this year, Anula Shetty began an exploratory research phase working closely with SEPTA. As the 6th largest transit system in the U.S, SEPTA offers an expansive platform for public art with the potential to reach upwards of 750,000 people daily. In the coming months, Shetty will work with SEPTA and the community to conceptualize public art that prompts commuters to look up and connect with one another, creating new and positive associations with public transit beyond the “daily grind.” COVID-19 disrupted and fractured the public’s relationship with public transportation in many respects; a key goal of this project will be to

infuse an aspect of joy and comfort back into the transit experience. The project will unfold to the public in two phases: the first activation will occur in early June, with a culmination of the year-long project toward the end of 2023.

“SEPTA is thrilled to partner with Public Works for its inaugural project,” says Leslie Richards, General Manager/CEO of SEPTA. “Transit does more than just move people; it brings people together for life events, cultural experiences, celebrations, business ventures, sporting events, and more. As our riders intersect with one another, we strive to create an environment that is safe, inspiring, and beautiful. We are excited to enhance our riders’ experience on SEPTA with the socially aware and compassionate work of artist Anula Shetty.”

Anula Shetty has cultivated a collaborative practice that addresses often ignored societal issues in Philadelphia. Her 2014 multiplatform art project and mobile app, *Time Lens*, documented the gentrification of the Chinatown North neighborhood in Philadelphia, incorporating voices, oral histories, and the dreams of homeless men and other residents who live and work in the community. From 2015 to 2019, Shetty collaborated with residents of the Fairhill and Hartranft neighborhoods in Philadelphia, an area that has suffered decades of depopulation and disinvestment, on a social practice video and immersive VR media project called *Places of Power*. Her most recent project, Villa Africana Colobó Garden is a collaboration with the Puerto Rican community in the Norris Square neighborhood. Shetty’s work, which is always considered and compassionate, puts the utmost importance on the upliftment of her local collaborators in an effort to better society as a whole.

“It is such an honor to be selected as the inaugural Public Works Artist in Residence,” said Anula Shetty. “As an immigrant South Asian artist, I am drawn to stories of travel, migration, distance, and connection. In my media art practice, I seek to amplify the voices and journeys of immigrant and marginalized communities in Philadelphia through collaboration and community-building. I am thrilled to bring this lens and vision to the creation of a new public art project at SEPTA.”

About the Artist: Anula Shetty is an award-winning filmmaker and new media artist. She is the founder of Fire Work Media, a production company that uses AR/VR and mobile apps to tell stories about the environment and marginalized communities. She is a 2020 CAAM (Center for Asian American Media) Fellow and a recipient of a Pew Fellowship. She was previously awarded three Media Arts Fellowships from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and was nominated for a USA Artist Fellowship. She received a Project Involve Fellowship, two Independence Foundation Fellowships, and a Leeway Foundation Transformation Award for her art and social change work.

About Forman Arts Initiative: Forman Arts Initiative (FAI), founded by Michael Forman and Jennifer Rice, is dedicated to supporting community-based arts and creativity in Philadelphia through programming, convening, and advocacy. Over the coming years, FAI will serve as a platform to connect, mentor, and support artists and organizations around Philadelphia to deepen and to grow the rich cultural heritage of Philadelphia’s communities. Since 2021, FAI

has been working in partnership with the Philadelphia Foundation to distribute \$3 million in unrestricted funding over five years to community artists and organizations in the Greater Philadelphia Area through a new grantmaking program called [Art Works](#). More FAI initiatives for the city will unfold in the coming months and years. Forman Arts Initiative collaborates closely with [DVDL](#), an agency of cultural strategists, to facilitate the programming and ongoing development of FAI. For more information, visit www.formanartsinitiative.org.

About Mural Arts: Mural Arts Philadelphia is the nation's largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. For over 35 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative and equitable process, creating over 4,000 artworks that have transformed public spaces and individual lives. Mural Arts aims to empower people, stimulate dialogue, and build bridges to mutual understanding through projects that attract artists from Philadelphia and around the world and programs that focus on youth education, restorative justice, mental health and wellness, and public art and its preservation. Popular mural tours offer a firsthand glimpse into the inspiring stories behind Mural Arts' iconic and unparalleled collection, earning Philadelphia worldwide recognition as the "Mural Capital of the World." For more information, call 215-685-0750 or visit muralarts.org. Follow us on social media: @muralarts on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), [MuralArtsPhiladelphia](#) on Facebook, and [phillymuralarts](#) on YouTube.

About SEPTA: The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority is one of the largest transit systems in the United States, serving five counties in the Greater Philadelphia area and connecting to transit systems in Delaware and New Jersey. Its services include regional rail, buses, trolleys, subways and a high-speed line to western suburbs. SEPTA, created by the Pennsylvania legislature in 1963, began operations in 1964. Many of its services and facilities date back further — as far as the early 20th century — and became part of SEPTA through other transportation companies and organizations absorbed during the authority's first decades.

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