Navigator

edited by SANDY HINGSTON



Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Winnie Sidharta's joyous mural at Hardena

KNOW-IT-ALL GUIDE

Art on Foot

We love it when out-of-towners ask us to point them to the LOVE statue, the Magic Gardens ... Rocky. But what about when visitors aren't around? It's time to emerge from COVID hibernation and visit the murals and street art that put us on the artistic map—including new works the tourists haven't even heard of yet.

by ERICA MOODY

New STUFF

1. CONSENSIS
Be among the first to see this nationwide participatory public art project that runs from May through September 1st; the Philly version is led by former poets laureate Yolanda Wisher and Trapeta Mayson. *Visit monumentlab.com/projects/regeneration for more information.*

2. CONTRAFUERTE
This Miguel Antonio Horn sculpture, completed in 2021, is striking both for its location (in a Center City alleyway) and its construction (aluminum-plated figures attached to a walkway leading to a parking garage). A diamond in the rough. *Cuthbert Street between 12th and 13th streets, Midtown Village.*

3. MAGICAL FANTASY
The latest Group X/Navy Yard collaboration brings the whimsical work of London-based Morag Myerscough to the old military base. The bright geometric structures will be on view through October. *Marine Parade Grounds, Broad Street and Constitution Avenue, South Philly.*





New CLASSICS

4. LAND BUOY
Installed in 2014, Jody Pinto's tribute to the immigration story in Philly—complete with a climbable spiral staircase facing the Delaware River—is worth a revisit. Pinto, whose family emigrated from Italy, has called it a "platform for viewing, for dreaming and remembering." *Washington Avenue Pier, Pennsport.*

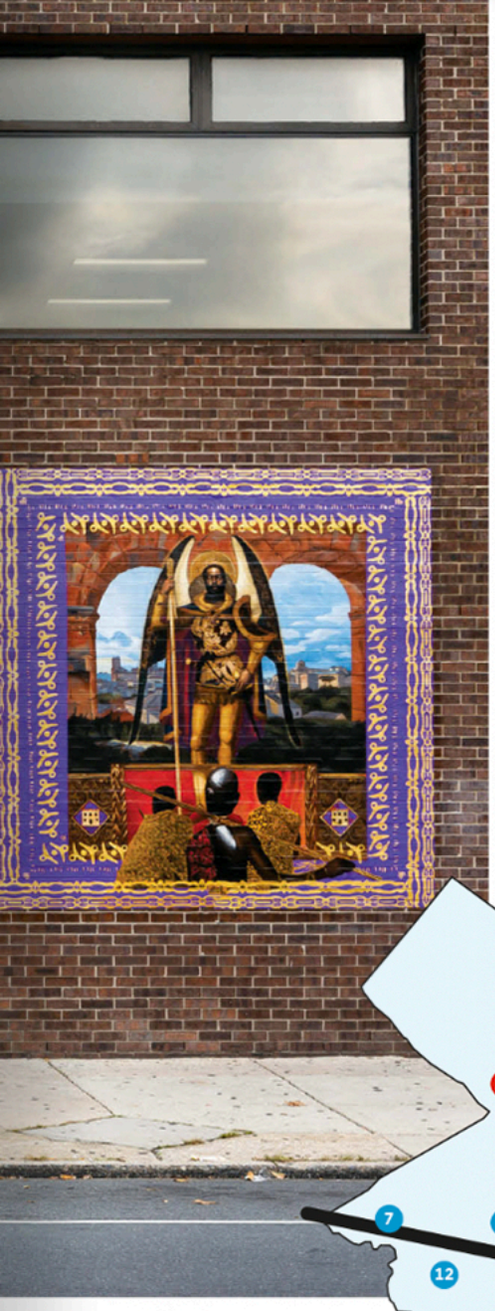
5. MAJA
Thanks to the Association for Public Art, Gerhard Marcks's sculpture returned to the Parkway in 2021 after 25 years tucked away in storage. The German artist and Bauhaus teacher, whose work was labeled "degenerate" by the Nazis, spoke out against anti-Semitism throughout his life. His female figure miraculously survived a bomb that destroyed the artist's home and studio in Bremen in 1943. *Ben Franklin Parkway at 22nd Street, Spring Garden.*

6. MVP
Brian McCutcheon's bronze is Philly's first commissioned statue of an African American girl. The basketball player, modeled after a 12-year-old athlete and meant to inspire local young people, is perfectly placed by the basketball courts at Smith Playground. *2100 South 24th Street, South Philly.*

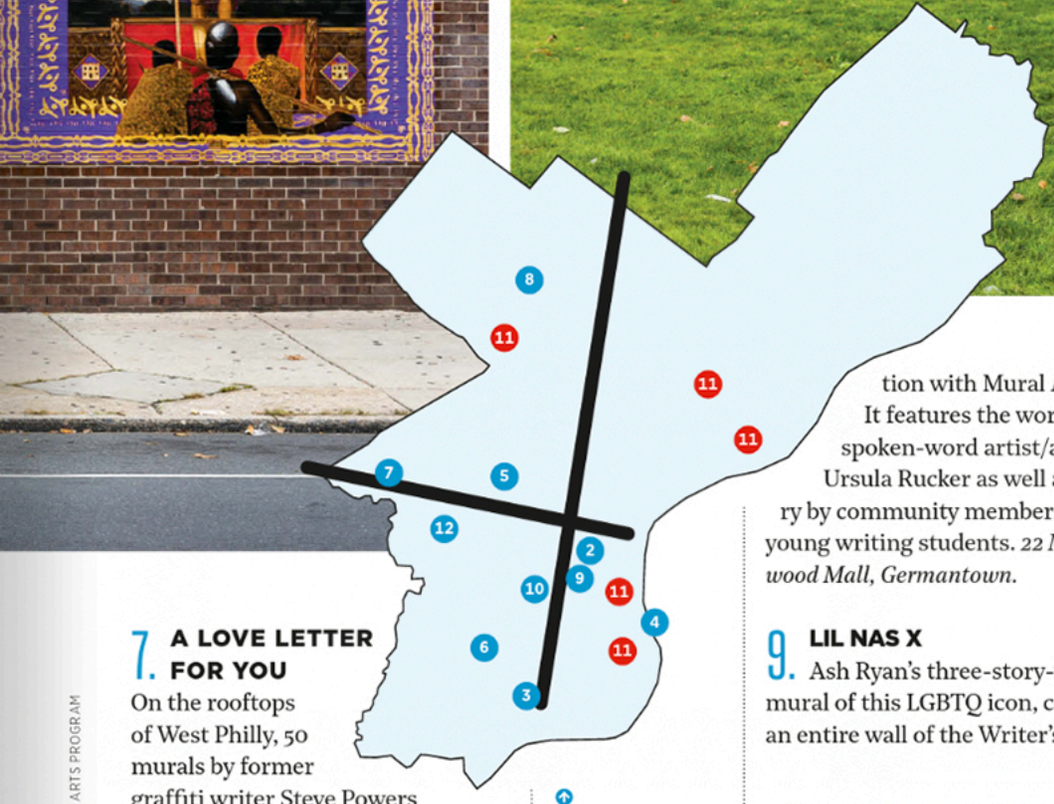
Fashion designer Walé Oyéjidé's *Legacy* honors the African diaspora.

Brian McCutcheon's *MVP*, ready to ball at Smith Playground

FROM TOP: STEVE WEINIK/CITY OF PHILADELPHIA MURAL ARTS PROGRAM; JAIME ALVAREZ







FROM TOP: STREESDEPT.COM; STEVE WEINIK/CITY OF PHILADELPHIA MURAL ARTS PROGRAM

Neighborhood GEMS

7. A LOVE LETTER FOR YOU

On the rooftops of West Philly, 50 murals by former graffiti writer Steve Powers spell out love notes to passengers riding by on the El. *Between 45th and 63rd streets, visible from the Market-Frankford El, West Philly.*

8. WE STILL HERE!

This work by Chip Thomas, a.k.a. Jetsonorama, is a collaboration with Mural Arts. It features the words of spoken-word artist/activist Ursula Rucker as well as poetry by community members and young writing students. *22 Maplewood Mall, Germantown.*

9. LIL NAS X

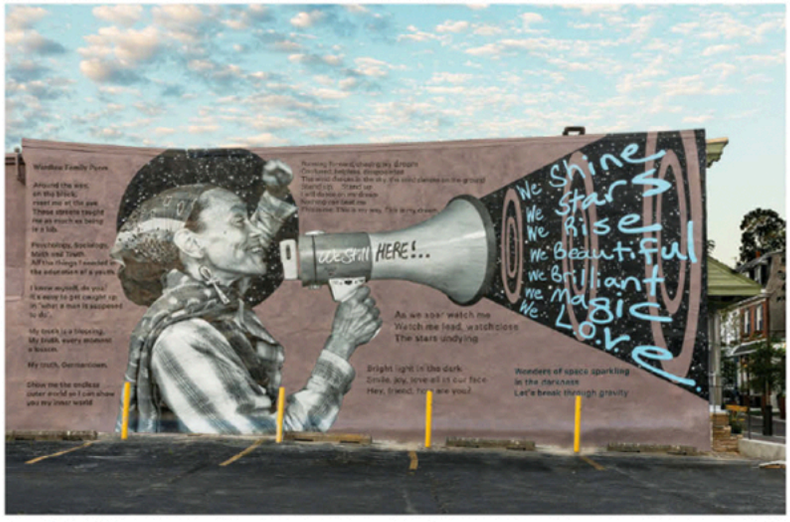
Ash Ryan's three-story-tall mural of this LGBTQ icon, covering an entire wall of the Writer's Block Rehab lounge in the Gayborhood, was painted last year after his debut album *Montero* was released. Visit to see the mural, then enjoy a craft cocktail and a charcuterie board. *1338 Cypress Street, Midtown Village.*

10. BHINNEKA TUNGGAL IKA

Get a serving of art along with some of the city's best Indonesian food next time you visit South

↑ Morag Myerscough's fantastical village at the Navy Yard

→ Chip Thomas got a hand from Maia, Darin Rowland, Ursula Rucker and Malachi Floyd on *We Still Here!*



Philly's Hardena. The title of this joyful Winnie Sidharta-led mural (with painting by Kien Nguyen, Sammy Kovnat and Emily White) is Javanese for "Unity in Diversity"; the work tells the story of Indonesian immigration to Philly. *1754 South Hicks Street, Point Breeze.*

11. "LOCAL CRITTERS"

Mural Arts may be the largest, but it isn't the only mural game in town. Check out the work of up-and-coming organizations like V.U.R.T. Creative and Paradigm Gallery. V.U.R.T.'s "Local Critters" project features animals commissioned to "beautify communities in need"; Evan Lovett's *Philadelphia Trash Panda* (actually a pretzel-gnawing raccoon) in Port Richmond is a standout. *Locations across Philly including Kensington, Port Richmond, Pennsport, East Falls and Queen Village.*

12. LEGACY

Fashion designer Walé Oyéjidé, whose art-inspired clothing has appeared in films including *Black Panther*, lent his talents to this fabric-inspired mural on the side of the Blackwell Library. The intricate piece honors the culture of the African diaspora. *125 South 52nd Street, West Philly.*



Miguel Antonio Horn's *ContraFuerte* haunts a Center City alley.



STREET SMARTS

If you geek out about murals and wheat-paste posters and graffiti, you know **Conrad Benner**. The Fishtown native's Streets Dept blog (*streetsdept.com*) has been a resource for public and street art for more than a decade.

His Instagram has 149,000 followers and counting; he's got a podcast; he recently launched a print magazine for Patreon subscribers; and he's developed partnerships with organizations including VisitPhilly and the Philadelphia Flower Show to execute public art. We asked Benner what makes Philly's public art scene so exemplary.

How is Philly's public art scene different from those of other major cities? Oftentimes, murals can be tools for developers to create districts and draw people to an area to boost its economy. Whether or not that's the intent going in, it can result in the creation of a mural district. In Miami, for example, Wynwood Walls has become such a tourist attraction that it has created a gentrifying force for the neighborhood around it. In Detroit and Denver, they're focused on bringing in outside talent—big names to create murals on walls in the city. In Philly, though, it's less about bringing in gigantic names from across the world to create mural districts and tourist attractions. It's more about creating beauty for neighborhoods and for people across the city. So the bulk of our murals are not concentrated in one area.

What are your hopes for the future of public art in Philly? I hope it looks more like individual neighborhood groups coming together and finding funding to create murals on their own in their own neighborhoods, either with artists from the neighborhoods or with artists from outside. I think the more mural groups we have, the more people involved in our public art, the better.

What's the outlook on graffiti in Philly? Artists see a blank wall in their city that's been abandoned by industry or by a property owner, and they view it as a place for art. That's where you find some of the best art and some of the best graffiti, and people like it there. The city has about $1.3 million a year to spend on graffiti removal. That means it's easy for you to complain about a piece of street art and the city will clean it up. When I see a piece of street art last for months or years on end, which I have seen many, many, many times, it means that no one's complaining about it. What does that mean? It means that this is a value to people in their neighborhood. This is a value to people in the city.

FROM LEFT: STREETSDEPT.COM; LINETTE MESSINA KIELINSKI

SIX TO WATCH

Keep an eye out for non-commissioned works across the city from these daring artists, recommended by Conrad Benner.



Bob Will Reign

KNOWN FOR Hand-drawn sticker art since 2003.

FOLLOW **@bobwillreign**



Symone Salib

KNOWN FOR Wheat-paste portraits and quotes, often touching on political themes.

FOLLOW **@symonesalibstudio**



Kid Hazo

KNOWN FOR Pop-art-inspired comedic signs; being anonymous.

FOLLOW **@kidhazo**



Olivia McKnight

KNOWN FOR Colorful comic-book-style wheat-paste self-portraits.

FOLLOW **@oliviamcknight62**



Marisa Velázquez-Rivas

KNOWN FOR Wheat-pasting personal drawings with queer and Latino themes.

FOLLOW **@marisa.vr**



Stikman

KNOWN FOR Stick figures on streets.

FOLLOW Look around; the mysterious artist isn't on social media.

STREETSDEPT.COM; SALIB: CANDY GONZALEZ; RIVAS: MARISA VELAZQUEZ-RIVAS