

The Arts Transforming Cities; Cities Transforming the Arts

Meryl Levitz 16 May 2012

The arts have the power to transform people, neighborhoods and even entire cities. Just look at Miami's 10-year-strong *Art Basel Miami Beach*, the most prestigious art show in the Americas. It has helped give new life to the cultural scene of South Florida and Miami Beach, now brimming with private collections and expanded museum and gallery spaces. Take into consideration *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980*, a six-month, 60-plus partners initiative showing off Southern California's emergence as an arts capital. Or consider Philadelphia's public art offerings. In 1959, City Council passed the revolutionary "percent for art" ordinance, mandating that a percentage of construction costs for city projects be set aside for the fine arts. Today, Philadelphia is home to thousands of statues, sculptures, murals and other permanent installations that bring color, beauty and life to people, neighborhoods and the entire city.

Philadelphia is about to show off the transformative power of art once again with a first-of-its-kind powerhouse partnership among 14 city organizations and cultural

partners that will focus on the region's vast and vibrant visual arts offerings. Launching in March 2012, With Art Philadelphia™ is a two-year, \$2 million marketing campaign supporting the area's varied visual arts scene and the many artists who make it the colorful canvas that it is. That includes everything from museum stalwarts to independent collectives to plentiful public arts to popular annual events. And it includes everyone from classically trained art teachers to gallery owners to muralists to on-the-rise student artists. It even goes beyond the traditional definition of art to embrace the region's bountiful gardens, high-fashion boutiques and design must-dos.

Why Philadelphia? Why Now?

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In May 2012, The Barnes Foundation's Philadelphia campus will debut on the culturally rich Benjamin Franklin Parkway with one of the world's greatest collections of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist and early Modern paintings. The founding partners involved in With Art Philadelphia—the City of Philadelphia, the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC)—realized that Philadelphia would be the center of the biggest art story in the world in 2012 and wanted to leverage the energy of

this significant moment by collaborating to generate sustained attention on its wide-ranging arts and culture scene.

The initial group recognized early on that they could do a much better job of getting the message out if they collaborated with a broad base of stakeholders to shine a significant spotlight on the region's exciting art offerings. That would mean pooling the talents and financial resources of some of the city's major players. Today, the founding partners are joined by a continually growing mega team of cultural organizations and marketers—the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, Parkway Council Foundation, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (PCVB), the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, The Lenfest Foundation, PNC and PECO—all working together to bring Philadelphia's visual arts scene into sharp focus for potential international, national and regional travelers searching for their next inspired big-city experience.

In the recent past, individual cultural organizations have worked with GPTMC and the PCVB to create buzz, drive attendance and increase overnight visitation around special exhibitions such as Salvador Dalí at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, *Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs* at The Franklin Institute and the *Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts* at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts and beyond. And

that's exactly what these partnerships have done. The *King Tut* exhibition, for example, drew more than 1.3 million visitors from all across the U.S. and at least 13 foreign countries, resulting in nearly 100,000 hotel room nights and \$127 million in economic impact. These small-but-significant collaborations have proven to be extraordinarily worthwhile, giving the partners great confidence that the major team effort centered around all-things artistic will prove crucial in cementing Philadelphia's reputation as one of the world's great art capitals.

The Stories To Be Told

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During the early planning stages, the collaborators identified rich and complex themes that they could spin out over the course of the project.

- **The Visual Arts Story:** Philadelphia's creative sector is rich and diverse, encompassing a wide range of experiences that With Art Philadelphia will promote. Visitors can see a Barnes-related exhibit at a major institution like the Philadelphia Museum Art (*Gauguin, Cézanne, Matisse: Visions of Arcadia*, June 20 through September 3) or the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA and Dr. Barnes, April 7 through July 8). They can check out the work of emerging artists at a collective such as InLiquid or Vox Populi.

Or, they can attend one of the city's popular annual art events like Design Philadelphia or Open Studio Tours.

- **The Parkway Story:** The museum-lined Benjamin Franklin Parkway will be made even more magnificent with the addition of the Barnes Foundation, and the mile-long stretch that runs from City Hall to the Philadelphia Museum of Art will elevate its already-stellar status as a center for art, architecture, science, public art, education and more.
- **The Garden Story:** Albert Barnes' creativity was not limited to the walls of his Barnes Foundation. He also had a strong horticultural vision. With Art Philadelphia will showcase the City's green assets—from the Philadelphia International Flower Show to the wonder that is Longwood Gardens to the gardens that accent galleries all over the region.
- **The Education Story:** Education was big for Barnes, who believed in the transformative power of the arts, and it's big for Philadelphia. With the Barnes Foundation, PAFA, Moore College of Art & Design, University of the Arts and Temple University's Tyler School of Arts, Philadelphia serves as an educational playground for the creative community.
- **The Philadelphia Story:** Philadelphia's creativity goes beyond the visual arts to include its food, its shops, its neighborhoods and its people—all of which will be highlighted as part of With Art Philadelphia.

If You Promote It, They Will Come

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For more than 15 years, GPTMC and others have heavily promoted Philadelphia as a premier tourism destination filled with authentic historical attractions, accessible arts, delicious eats, walkable streets, gorgeous gardens, thrilling sporting events and much more. Clearly, the message has resonated with consumers. In 2010, visitation reached 37.4 million visitors, increasing by 40 percent from 26.7 million in 1997 (Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation n.d.). What's more, Philadelphia is bucking the trend in the cultural world. According to the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, total attendance (paid and unpaid) increased at arts and cultural organizations by 5 percent from 2007 to 2009. Both the National Arts Index and the National Endowment for the Arts show a decline in national attendance over the same period. Not only are visitors coming to Philadelphia, but GPTMC's internal research shows that 32 percent of overnight visitors are participating in arts and cultural activities during their trip.

City boosters aren't the only ones touting the region's great cultural offerings. National media outlets are spreading the word too. *Travel + Leisure's* "America's Favorite Cities" poll was featured in the November 2011 issue of the magazine, and Philadelphia stacked up well in the culture category, coming in at #1 for overall culture

(Travel and Leisure 2011). Voted by visitors, Philly also ranked #2 for classical music, #5 for theaters/performance art and #5 for museums/galleries.

The good news is that people are choosing the Philadelphia region more and more, investing their time and money in a place where they know rewarding experiences await. For many of these visitors, those rewarding experiences come in the form of artistic experiences, which Philadelphia delivers in plentitude. With Art Philadelphia will spread the word to Philadelphia residents, frequent visitors, art aficionados and brand new audiences—all of whom will keep the city's art scene vibrant with their visits.

In It Together

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Philadelphia's arts and tourism industries are working—thriving even, but never have so many of them worked so closely together until With Art Philadelphia, a program that will show the world that Philadelphia is ready. Ready for its close-up. Ready for the recognition it deserves as an arts capital. Ready to transform. Ready to welcome the world.

As president and CEO of the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC), Meryl Levitz is responsible for expanding Philadelphia's regional

tourism, worth \$8.7 billion in economic impact and accounting for more than 85,000 regional jobs annually. The region welcomed 37.4 million domestic visitors in 2010, 33.1 million of whom were leisure visitors. That's 10 million more leisure visitors than in 1997, when GPTMC first started marketing.

References

References

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