



Streets Dept Presents: Philly's Top 10 Street Art Moments of 2021

DECEMBER 28, 2021



What a year, what a year. Welcome to Streets Dept's annual list of the most-talked-about and most-engaging work created by artists throughout Philly's public space!

First, a disclaimer: I'm using the term "street art" loosely here. What you'll find on this list is a representation of this year through the eyes of this blog and you, our readers. That means you'll find both large-scale and small-scale works of art on this list. Art that was commissioned (*aka public art*), as well as art that was not (*aka street art*). Art that responds to more universal experiences, as well as art that represents a more individualist expression. But all the artworks on this list were new and installed in Philly's public space this year.

As always, this list is built by both you and I. The list is solely comprised of installations that I've documented and written about for this blog in 2021. And since I can't document or know about everything that happens, it is in a way curated by me. Its order, however, is chosen by you, our readers. Mostly by how much the articles and the social media posts about each project were viewed and shared by you. (Note: if you're an artist creating in Philly and you want to be documented by Streets Dept, please [read here](#).)

So without further ado, here's the list of the 10 most talked about works of art that we saw in Philly's public space in 2021 :

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#10) Nicole Nikolich Hatches Playful New Yarnbomb

It's not everyday that a Philly street artist creates something that ends up getting them over a million views **on TikTok** and highlighted by the Today Show, but that's just the response **Nicole Nikolich** (aka Lace in the Moon) got with her "take it over easy" fried egg yarnbomb. Installed in the spring, this non-commissioned installation stayed up for many months, a testament to not-only its online love but to how much passersby appreciated it (and didn't complain about it) too.

See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/04/17/center-city-wall-gets-egged-by-playful-new-yarnbomb-installation/>



#9) Tim McFarlane Gives Us Abstract

This past summer saw the creation of a brilliant new abstract mural from one of our city's most-talented muralists, **Tim McFarlane**. We interviewed the artist soon after the mural's completion: "Abstract art in the public space is very important to me because it's something that can make people rethink relationships to their immediate environments in a different way than representational art."

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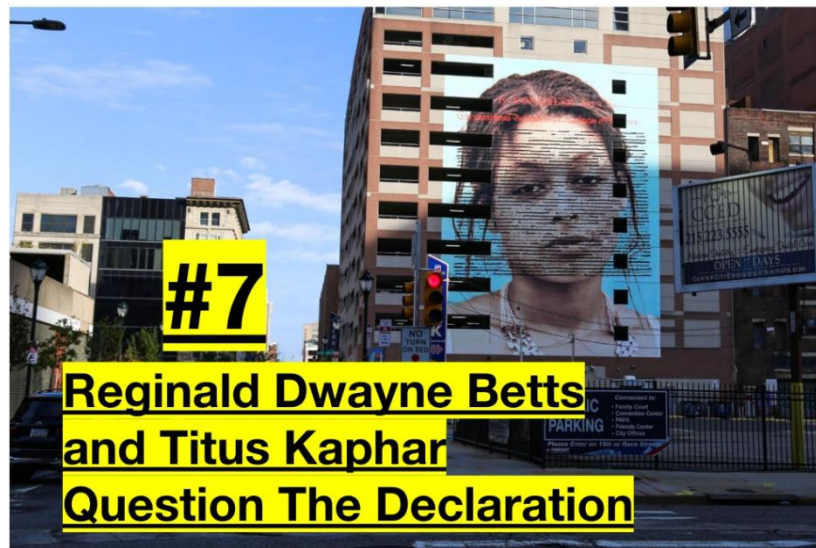
See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/07/20/new-tim-mcfarlane-mural-shows-us-the-importance-of-abstract-public-art/>



#8) Ash Ryan Paints Lil Nas X

This summer also saw the completion of a temporary new mural celebrating pop icon, Lil Nas X, painted by **Ash Ryan**! And yes, if you're wondering, Lil Nas X learned about the mural and **posted** about it to his Instagram soon after. In a city of some 4,000+ murals, it's fun to see artists (and wall owners) be playful with what murals in this city can be, especially when they're temporary.

See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/06/09/ash-ryan-finishes-her-lil-nas-x-mural-in-phillys-gayborhood-lil-nas-x-takes-notice/>



#7) Reginald Dwayne Betts and Titus Kaphar Question the Declaration

A new mural this fall by artists **Reginald Dwayne Betts** and **Titus Kaphar**, created as fellows with Mural Arts Philadelphia's Reimagining Re Entry Fellowship, asks its viewers to hold truth to power and examine the spoken and unspoken truths in one of

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the United States' founding documents: "The general idea of this project is that the Declaration of Independence is both a revolutionary document but one that brings to life the many contradictions of America."

See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/10/24/new-philly-mural-highlights-the-truths-and-contradictions-embedded-in-the-declaration-of-independence/>



#6) Kah Yangni Centers Trans Philadelphians

I can't say this enough: this is one of my favorite new Philly murals in recent memory. Brilliant work from an artist-on-the-rise, **Kah Yangni**, combined with a lovely Frankford Avenue location. Honestly, I get lost a bit in this mural every time I come by it!

And I mention its location because the majority of Philly's LGBTQ+ murals are in the Gayborhood, which is fine. But we exist everywhere. So it's overdue to see murals with queer and trans themes in neighborhoods around the city. Listeners of the Streets Dept Podcast might remember that I pushed Mural Arts' Jane Golden on this fact in my 2019 interview with her. You can listen to her response in the episode [here](#), but she was very receptive to the criticism. And clearly things are now changing!

See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/09/06/in-progress-new-fishtown-mural-by-kah-yangni-celebrates-trans-and-non-binary-philadelphians>

Also be sure to listen to my December 2021 Streets Dept Podcast interview with Kah Yangni [here](#). In it we discuss the power and purpose of an artwork like this, and learn about the difficulty in finding a Philly wall owner who, frankly, wasn't transphobic.

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#5) Amberella Experiments with Mosaic

I love when relatively small artworks end up grabbing your attention. In this case, I think that's due in-part to seeing a long-working and beloved Philly street artist really push a style for which they're well-known. That artist in this case, of course, was **Amberella**, who created their first-ever mosaic artwork. And I do hope she continues to create in this medium, because I think it's such a smart evolution of her heart series!

See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/02/21/amberella-experiments-with-mosaic/>



#4) Dora Cuenca Inspires A Marriage Proposal

Speaking of relatively small artworks, this mini-mural by **Dora Cuenca** was commissioned this year for Percy Street by Philly couple looking to proclaim their love *not only* for Philly artists but for each other. Streets Dept Contributor, Eric Dale got the whole story for us back in January!

See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/01/04/new-dora-cuenca-mural-commissioned-on-percy-street-as-a-marriage-proposal/>

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#3) Street Art Project Frees Black Mothers

This spring, the **People's Paper Co-op** collaborated with the **Philadelphia Community Bail Fund** for their 4th annual **Mama's Day Bail Out** campaign. Each year the co-op organizes exhibitions, parades, press conferences, and events to raise awareness and funds for the project, while sharing the stories, dreams, and demands of formerly incarcerated women with thousands of Philadelphians. In that time, their poster and t-shirt sales have raised tens of thousands of dollars to free Black mothers and caregivers for Mother's Day.

See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/04/26/street-art-project-raises-bail-money-to-free-black-mothers-by-mothers-day/>



#2) Kid Hazo Clowns Corny Oat Milk

This year a very corny oat milk company destroyed a lot of local art around Philly with their trash guerilla marketing campaign, and none other than Philly's favorite comedic streets artist, **Kid Hazo** was on the scene first to mock the out-of-touch cooperation. I, for one, hope that I never have to write about oat milk or terrible advertising campaigns ever again!

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See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/04/15/kid-hazo-clowns-woke-oat-milk-company-minor-figures-for-destroying-local-art/>



#1) Miguel Antonio Horn Installs An Icon

This year, **Miguel Antonio Horn**'s *Contrafuerte* truly blew people's minds. We thought we knew what Philly public art could be, then Miguel said, *hold my beer*. *Contrafuerte* is a work of art that will be celebrated in Philly public art maps and tourist guides for many decades to come. It's not everyday you get to see a new landmark be installed, but that's what we got this year. Move over, Oldenburg. Congrats, Miguel!

See/read more about this artwork here: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/08/30/stunning-new-installation-in-philly-by-artist-miguel-antonio-horn/>

And listen to my September 2021 Streets Dept Podcast interview with Miguel Antonio Horn [here](#)—a truly can't miss episode where we discuss many of the challenges of bring this work to life, including fighting for its now iconic location that no one aside from him originally wanted.

Full article: <https://streetsdept.com/2021/12/28/streets-dept-presents-phillys-top-10-street-art-moments-of-2021/>