

# Artists to Transform La Guardia Airport

A partnership with the Public Art Fund brings permanent installations by world-class artists to the new Terminal B.



By Hilarie M. Sheets

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As part of the ongoing \$8 billion transformation of New York's La Guardia Airport, Gov. Andrew Cuomo has announced a partnership with the Public Art Fund for permanent site-specific installations by leading contemporary artists to help reimagine this gateway to the city.

Four internationally recognized artists — Jeppe Hein, Sabine Hornig, Laura Owens and Sarah Sze — have been commissioned by LaGuardia Gateway Partners, together with the New York-based nonprofit for public art, to execute large-scale projects integrated throughout the architecture of the arrivals and departures hall of the new Terminal B, expected to open later this year. The budget for the art program is close to \$10 million.

“To say, ‘That looks like airport art’ wouldn’t be a compliment,” said Nicholas Baume, director and chief curator of the Public Art Fund, of the kind of generic, corporate-looking artworks often found in airports. “We’re really trying to turn that on its head. It’s very seldom that you see something that’s conceived for the site by a major artist.”

Mr. Hein, a Danish artist based in Berlin, makes playful sculptures that promote social interaction between strangers. Ms. Hornig, also from Berlin, does architectural interventions on windows and facades that challenge the way viewers understand their surroundings. Ms. Owens, a Los Angeles-based artist known for her eclectic and experimental approach to painting, was celebrated in a survey exhibition at the Whitney Museum. And the installation artist Ms. Sze, a resident of New York, has already made a permanent civic imprint with her 2017 commission for the 96th Street Station of the Second Avenue subway line.

At La Guardia, all of the artists are stretching the bounds of their own practices, Mr. Baume said, either by working at an ambitious scale not previously achieved or in a new medium.

Rick Cotton, executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owns the airport, conceded that “excitement” has not been the word most travelers have associated with La Guardia.

“La Guardia of the past has been a third-world experience, which Governor Cuomo’s vision for the airport is to totally reverse,” Mr. Cotton said. He hopes aspects of the art “would come to symbolize the airport and become a reference point for travelers, almost like the clock in Grand Central.”