

Hilarie M. Sheets, "Move Over, La Guardia and Newark: 18 Artists to Star at New J.F.K. Terminal,"  
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# Move Over, La Guardia and Newark: 18 Artists to Star at New J.F.K. Terminal

Terminal 6 at Kennedy International Airport will feature work by Charles Gaines, Barbara Kruger and more. Developers of new terminals must invest in public art.



**By Hilarie M. Sheets**

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John F. Kennedy International Airport's new Terminal 6, scheduled to open in 2026, will host installations by 18 contemporary artists hailing from seven countries, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced on Tuesday.

The \$4.2 billion facility in Queens will showcase the largest number of works of any New York airport by major figures from the United States, including Nina Chanel Abney, Teresita Fernandez, Charles Gaines and Barbara Kruger, alongside emerging international talents such as Felipe Baeza from Mexico, Kerstin Brätsch from Germany, and Uman, born in Somalia (all now living in New York).

Over the last four years, a broad range of public artworks have been unveiled by the Port Authority in new terminals at La Guardia Airport in Queens and Newark Liberty International Airport, in New Jersey, as the agency continues to expand its popular art program. La Guardia's Delta Terminal C has six permanent artworks that celebrate the city's energy and diversity; Terminal B has five installations, and Newark has two large works that reflect the landscape of New Jersey.

"The lessons and the positive feedback we've gotten from both the La Guardia terminals and at Newark have really hit home," said Rick Cotton, the executive director of the Port Authority, which runs the major New York area airports, citing surveys of its new facilities showing improved ratings for ambience and passenger experience at La Guardia's Terminal B and Terminal C and Newark's Terminal A. "What you're seeing at J.F.K.'s Terminal 6 is the increased recognition of the impact and the importance of the art."

The art budget for Terminal 6 is \$22 million, about double what was spent on art in each of La Guardia's new terminals. Terminal 6, including the art, is funded entirely by JFK Millennium Partners, a consortium of private developers led by the Vantage Group, which is also the one of the major investors and developers at La Guardia's Terminal B. The Port Authority has made art a requirement of all private developers it has contracted to build its new airport terminals.

For J.F.K., the Port Authority has again teamed with the Public Art Fund, the New York-based nonprofit that led the commissioning of the installations at La Guardia's Terminal B and Newark. (The Queens Museum curated the site-specific works at La Guardia's Terminal C).

George Casey, the chair and chief executive of Vantage who is steering JFK Millennium Partners, said, "Just watching people go through La Guardia's Terminal B, anecdotally, we see our investment making sense."



A digital rendering of John F. Kennedy International Airport's new Terminal 6, scheduled to open in 2026. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey

The councilwoman Vickie Paladino, representing District 19 in Queens, has some reservations about the cost. "This will be good for New York as a global hub, and provide much needed local jobs," she wrote in an email. "I have concerns about how some of this money is being spent, of course, and \$22 million on artwork seems like a missed opportunity for savings."

A striking feature of the new terminal will be 10 large-scale glass mosaic floor medallions that create moments of surprise. Artists working in this format include Candida Alvarez and Charline von Heyl, with well-established careers, and rising talents such as Shara Hughes, Eddie Martinez, Kambui Olujimi, GaHee Park and Dyani White Hawk.

Abney, Laure Prouvost and Haegue Yang will make sculptural installations suspended from the ceiling, and Nevin Aladag and Sky Hopinka will produce wall works. For most of these artists — including Gaines and Kruger who are also contributing wall pieces — it will be their first permanent public commissions in New York City, according to Nicholas Baume, the artistic and executive director of the Public Art Fund.

The organization reviewed hundreds of artists in the research process, from which a short list of candidates emerged who developed proposals. The 18 artists were chosen by a committee with representatives from the Port Authority and JFK Millennium Partners and one independent art expert.

“The artist group is global, both in the sense of those who were born in different parts of the world but also many New York artists who’ve found their way here from other places,” Baume said. “We really tried to dig in and think about the significance of J.F.K. as a global connector and welcome point to the United States as well as to New York.”