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Initiative for Public Art-Reston Exhibition at Dulles International Airport Celebrates Reston's Public Art and the Community as a Cultural Destination

The history, dedication and achievement of art in Reston is on display for the world to see. "Reston: The Art of Community," an exhibit focusing on Reston's contribution to the arts and coordinated by the Initiative for Public Art-Reston (IPAR), is currently on display at Washington Dulles International Airport, which serves more than 21 million passengers, including 7 million international travelers, annually.

Comprised of panels organized by geographic locations, the exhibit traces the internationally known planned community's rich public art history and its continued dedication after 50 years to the arts. It also showcases Reston's still-growing inventory of close to 50 existing and temporary public art works.

On display through the spring in a space between baggage claims No. 9 and 10, a space previously used as a security checkpoint at the airport, the exhibit gets plenty of traffic from the nearly 1000 flights each day. And the concept is something new for the airport. According to Margaret Bishop, the community relations manager for the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), this is the first time Dulles has welcomed this kind of extensive, freestanding exhibition.

The work has resonated with not only the traveling public, but also the airport's employees, who have asked what's coming next, Bishop said.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce Reston's public art and Reston as a cultural destination to visitors who may have heard of the community but have not yet had the chance to visit it," said Anne Delaney, IPAR's executive director. "We are extremely pleased by this collaboration with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority."

Award-winning exhibition designer Jeanne Krohn and urban planner and former National Building Museum curator Mary Konsoulis created the overall design and content of the IPAR exhibition. Sean Bahrami, media manager at the Reston Association, took the photos used in what Bishop describes as the exhibit's "eye-catching backdrop."

The original exhibition was a collaboration between IPAR, whose mission "seeks to inspire an ongoing commitment to public art and [to] create a new generation of artworks in Reston," and the Reston Historic Trust, which operates the Reston Museum.

In addition to the panels, the IPAR exhibition includes a companion video shown on monitors above the baggage belts. The video is a three-minute clip of a longer documentary, "Fun, Beauty, Fantasy: Reston's Public Art," made by Peabody-Award winning filmmaker Rebekah Wingert-Jabi, a Reston resident. The video clip's music, "The Reston Story," was composed by Brian Scarbrough, also a Reston resident.

A full-color, exhibition booklet also is available at the airport's Traveler's Aid desks. The booklet's updated second edition was sponsored by Comstock Partners, Reston Association, Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, Pat and Steve Macintyre, and Janet and Alan Rems.

The idea to install "Reston: The Art of Community" temporarily at Dulles grew out of a conversation between Bishop and Delaney. Delaney drew her attention to the art of place making and how public art reflects a community, Bishop said, noting "we loved the name 'The Art of Community' and how it captured what Reston is about and what we're about."

In 2008, MWAA adopted an airport program that features the works of local and regional artists. After seeing how well the IPAR exhibition fits in with the strategy of this program, she said, "we're increasingly looking to highlight coordinated exhibits at the airport."

Across from the "Reston: The Art of Community" exhibition is a display that features award-winning Loudoun County architecture. The two together, Bishop said, are "a great way to feature the two counties in which the airport sits."