

AKRON-CANTON AIRPORT



Artists Jessica Travis of Akron and Tracy Dawn Brewer talk about inspiration behind their work during the unveiling of Wing Art at the Akron-Canton Airport. JULIE VENNITTI BOTOS/CANTON REPOSITORY

Forgotten airplane wings become vibrant art

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GREEN – Discarded and scrap airplane wings have been transformed into gleaming, vibrant and colorful pieces of public art now on display at the Akron-Canton Airport.

Unveiled on Thursday at a small ceremony, the free-standing pieces of painted metal depict Northeast Ohio imagery and will greet those arriving and walking through the atrium and exit lane.

Tracy Dawn Brewer of Plain Township and Jessica Travis of Akron were selected out of more than 30 artists who submitted ideas for the artwork in a collaboration between ArtsinStark in Can-

ton and ArtsNow in Summit County. Also helping with the project was the MAPS Air Museum, located near the airport.

Travis' vision for the finished art piece began while drawing on paper. Brewer's concept is a play on the use of an airplane wing.

Both artists were tasked with representing Northeast Ohio and incorporating aviation themes into their works. Travis depicted scenes and symbols of the region, including the Pro Football Hall of Fame, cornfields, Lake Erie, blue sky, roadways, hot air balloons, an airplane, and recognizable buildings from the skylines of Canton, Akron and Cleveland.

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David Whitehill
President and CEO of ArtsinStark

Airport art

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"So my vision was to create a space where it was Ohio from the ground up," Travis said. "I remember being a child down here in Stark County and looking at the hot air balloons, which is my favorite thing," she added with a bright smile.

Brewer, meanwhile, painted the images of 23 species of birds native to Ohio while representing 23 counties in the region.

"When I read the proposal to come up with something for Northeast Ohio and flying," she said, "I immediately thought of how much I love visiting Stark Parks and all of the wildlife, and I wanted to highlight birds that are found in Ohio."

Here's what you need to know about the cool, new art at the Akron-Canton Airport:

More about the artwork

The art pieces feature two sides.

Travis said she created her work over the course of 10 days.

"I was really excited about this," she said. "It's the first time I've ever done anything this size and with this material, and I'm really happy that my vision that was on flat paper came to life."

Brewer's artwork is enhanced with technology, using the Artivive phone app and what she describes as augmented reality, featuring animation and sound.

Brewer estimated it took eight to 10 hours to come up with the entire concept, plus the same amount of time to animate the art piece and incorporate the augmented reality. Painting took about 36 hours.

One side of Brewer's art piece has images of 23 birds; the other side identifies the birds and names the corresponding counties. She conducted research to determine a variety of bird species found in Ohio.

For example, the golden eagle represents Columbiana County; the dark-eyed junco represents Carroll; the downy woodpecker is for Wayne; bald eagle for Holmes; a dove for Portage; cardinal for Stark; blue jay in Cuyahoga; snow goose for Tuscarawas; and the ring-necked pheasant for Summit.

How was MAPS Air Museum



Ren Camacho, CEO of the Akron-Canton Airport, looks over the art of Jessica Travis, as fellow artist Tracy Dawn Brewer, right, looks on following the unveiling of wing art at the airport Thursday. The free-standing pieces of painted metal depict northeast Ohio imagery. PHOTOS BY JULIE VENNETTI BOTOS/ CANTON REPOSITORY



David Regula, vice president of customer experience at Akron-Canton Airport, introduces the artists Thursday at the unveiling of wing art at the Akron-Canton Airport. Two Ohio artists' works are on display.

involved with the art?

MAPS provided the scrap airplane wings, and also assisted with restoring them for use as the canvas and base material for the artwork, said David Regula, the airport's vice president of customer experience.

Crediting Kim Kovesci, executive director of MAPS, and Kent Kleinknecht, also of MAPS, Regula said the entire museum was amazing and instrumental to making the artwork a reality.

During a previous tour of the airport, David Whitehill, president and CEO of ArtsinStark, had suggested that airplane parts be repurposed into art "that can grasp us all."

"I think what makes this special is it really gives you a sense of place that you know you're in Northeast Ohio, and people coming and going, whether they're from here or from away, will get a real sense of what they're walking into as they embark or debark from the airport," he said following the unveiling. "I think that's what makes it special."

The wings were plucked out of thousands of airplane parts at MAPS, which uses old parts to refurbish existing aircraft, Regula said.

Who is artist Tracy Dawn Brewer?

Brewer grew up in Hocking Hills and graduated from Ohio University.

She has an associate degree in art, bachelor's degree in communication, and master's degree in information and telecommunications systems.

A Plain Township resident for 23 years, Brewer has been working as an artist since high school.

Working both in marketing and as a professional artist, she's painted several murals. Her artwork is also on display at Belden Village Mall.

"I want people to realize that art can have a tech element, too," Brewer said. "I want them to be immersed in it; that's why it's so much fun with the app. ... The clouds are flying by you and the birds are flying out, and you hear them,

so it's interactive, and it gets the youth involved in art because it has a tech spin.

"... It's just really been a lot of fun to bring things to life that way, and it gets people to think outside the box of sometimes just that flat piece of art - that it can be more than that."

Who is artist Jessica Travis?

Travis was born in Canton before moving to Akron at age 6.

She discovered her love for art as a child, drawing and coloring, and using it both as therapy and a time to bond with her mother.

The self-taught artist also credited her Akron Public Schools teachers for encouraging and supporting her passion for creating.

Her artwork has been featured at Summa Health System, Weathervane Playhouse and the Akron Black Artist Guild exhibition.

"My main goal is to inspire," Travis said. "To inspire creativity, to have that childlike imagination, so I want people that come through (the airport) to see it, I want them to sit back for a while and study it, and I'd love to hear their perspectives on it, and I hope that it makes them feel like a part of them is in my artwork."

Airport CEO is 'super excited' about art

Ren Camacho, the airport's president and CEO, said the new art installation can have a calming effect on travelers and guests while giving them a sense of place.

"Not everyone has to go through the airport in a rushed fashion," he said. "... Why not come to the airport a little early and appreciate some of the local art we have to offer, and then some that are interactive, some that cater to all ages, and it also caters to those that may have ... disabilities, neurosensitive issues."

Work on the airport's strategic plan will include more artwork, Camacho said.

"I'm super excited about the opportunity to instill a little bit of art, a little bit of calmness, a little bit of appreciation really for local art (and) culture in the Akron-Canton area," he said.

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