

Works focus on airport and its people

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Airports are places of uneven pace. Sometimes we're rushing around to get to our gate and other times we're waiting for hours on end for a connecting flight. The only time we really look around is in the latter instance when we're grounded and the abundance of time has driven us to wander. The latest exhibition to open at the Albany

ON EXHIBIT

Airport Gallery, "Patterns of Engagement," reveals some unexpected things one might not notice about the airport and will give one a different appreciation for all the comings and goings of what can seem like such a transient place.

The idea behind "Patterns of Engagement," was to get contemporary artists to respond to the people around and the character of the Albany International Airport.

"By inviting artists to respond to this unique place and time, I hoped to encourage dialogue and discovery between those artists and our populations of travelers and employees," said Kathy Greenwood, the director of the Airport's Art & Culture Program.

She added in a statement, "This required asking new questions, forging new



Laini Nemett paints outdoors at the Albany International Airport.



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"Terminal Moment" by Tasha Depp is part of the "Patterns of Engagement" exhibit.

partnerships and redefining art in the Airport as something that can be shaped by those who inhabit the space."

It's a unique approach for the Airport Gallery and it made for a more interactive exhibition.

Take, for example, Chris St. Cyr's work, which invites viewers to take a much closer look at some of the seemingly familiar sights around the airport. He's one of the eight artists included in "Patterns of Engagement" and used his graphic design background to create a scavenger hunt by photographing spots around the terminals accessible to both employees and the public and turning them into kaleidoscopic patterned images.

Several of the large images are stacked pyramid style along one wall, with the adjoining label copy featuring the original photos of spots around the airport. It's easy to start off confident, thinking that one can easily match them up, but it's not nearly as simple as it sounds. Visitors can go find some of the featured spots around the airport, grab a sticker from the Gallery's registration desk and enter to win a print by Cyr.

Another artist whose work relied on interaction was Deborah Zlotsky. The painter and 2019 Guggenheim Foundation Fellow created a mural featuring vibrant blue and green geometric shapes, which is one of the first pieces that viewers see in the gallery.

The shapes are reflective of paper airplanes and were inspired by just that. Zlotsky asked airport employees to fold paper airplanes and place them into a deposit box. She got dozens of paper airplanes back and unfolded them all, using their creases to create four compositions. Three are in the Gallery and one can be seen on the first floor in the ticketing area.

In terms of scale alone, Zlotsky's works are impressive as is Adam Frelin's "Summit," a mountainous illusion of a snowy mountain cap that reaches nearly to the ceiling. Not too far away is a row of photos ("Air Space") framed by airplane windows, giving viewers an aerial look of Albany. One can imagine seeing the summit from the windows of a plane.

Nearby, work from Chris Victor's sculptures gives viewers a more grounded look at the airport. In what at first might seem like some sort of misshapen creature, upon closer inspection, one sees pieces of objects that are nearly familiar. In "Leviathan," one of the large scale assemblages created by Victor, the artist brings together ripped up pieces of plastic and paper, layered and woven together to make the familiar seem alien. Also as part of the exhibition, Victor is working on an assemblage of discarded construction materials from around the airport that otherwise would have been discarded.

Throughout the exhibition, one might hear Jack Magai's piece, "Instructions For Passing Time."

The video features people at the airport listening to a recording of a soothing voice telling them to do things like breathe deeply, look up, stretch, walk around, look out a window; actions that seem completely natural, that would otherwise melt into the background of any airport. It touches on the oddly calmly aspects of airports, the times when there's nothing left to do but wait.

Not too far away is a sweeping mixed media mural that touches on the more active aspects of the airport. In Tasha Depp's "Terminal Moment," people are lugging their bags and their children around, trying to find their ride, securing their bags, going through security, etc.

Depp often digitally draws her figures (as one can see at the start of the exhibition) but these are painted on overlapping layers of airport debris, including Plexiglass, cardboard boxes and carpet.

Some other standout pieces include Laini Nemett's hyperrealistic paintings of the airport in various stages of construction and Richard Garrison's strictly ordered painted grids.

"Patterns of Engagement" will be up at the Albany International Airport Gallery through March 2, 2020. There will be a reception from 5:30-7:30 p.m. on Jan. 17. For more info visit albanyairport.com.