



City of Philadelphia
MuralArtsProgram

History of the Mural Arts Program

The Mural Arts Program (MAP) began in 1984 as a component of the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network, an effort spearheaded by then Mayor Wilson Goode to eradicate the graffiti crisis plaguing the city. The Anti-Graffiti Network hired muralist Jane Golden to reach out to graffiti writers and to redirect their energies from destructive graffiti writing to constructive mural painting.

Jane Golden quickly befriended the graffiti writers and was impressed by their raw artistic talent and their self-taught knowledge of art history. She recognized the amazing creative force they represented, and she began to provide opportunities for them to channel their creative talent into mural-making. Mural painting also provided a support structure for these young men and women to refine their artistic skills, empowering them to take an active role in beautifying their own neighborhoods and communities. The murals they created instantly added color, beauty, and life to an old, industrial city struggling with decades of economic distress and population loss. The results of the program were nothing less than magical. From the beginning, Golden witnessed how mural-making changed lives and how the murals themselves began to mend the aesthetic fabric of the city. She had found her calling.

In 1996, Mayor Ed Rendell announced that the Anti-Graffiti Network would be reorganized into the Mural Arts Program, with Golden as the director. At the same time, Golden established a nonprofit organization, the Philadelphia Mural Arts Advocates, to raise funds and provide other support to the nationally-recognized program. Today's Philadelphia Mural Arts Program is an innovative and successful public/private partnership that encompasses both the city agency and the nonprofit.

Since it began, the Mural Arts Program has produced over 2,700 murals which have become a cherished part of the civic landscape and a great source of pride and motivation to the millions of residents and visitors who encounter them each year. In fact, the Mural Arts Program's unique efforts have earned Philadelphia international praise as the "City of Murals." But as stunning as the 2,700 murals are themselves, they are, most importantly, the visual products of a powerful and collaborative grassroots process in communities. The mural-making process gives neighborhood residents a voice to tell their individual and collective stories, a way to pass on culture and tradition, and a vehicle to develop and empower local leaders.

MAP's mural-making process also engages thousands of Philadelphia's at-risk children, youth, and adults who find their artistic voice, develop their self-confidence, or discover new ambitions while creating these murals through one of the many MAP art education and social service programs.

MAP's award-winning art education programs annually serve over 3,000 youth at 57 neighborhood sites throughout the city. MAP's programs are offered free and are targeted to at-risk youth. MAP's programs use an intensive curriculum that involves mural-making as a dynamic means to engage youth and to teach transferable life and job skills such as taking personal responsibility, teamwork, and creative problem-solving. In addition, the Mural Arts Program is currently involved in a five-year partnership with the School District of Philadelphia to transform 100 public schools throughout the city with an intensive mural-making curriculum that involves the schools' children in the process.

Beyond art education programming, MAP has also become a national leader in arts and criminal justice. MAP currently offers special educational outreach programs in local prisons and rehabilitation centers in an effort to use the restorative power of art to break the cycle of crime and violence in communities. MAP offers mural-making programs for adult men and women where inmates receive a stipend to create murals for schools and community centers throughout Philadelphia.

Since it began, MAP has directly engaged over 20,000 individuals and hundreds of organizations in pursuit of providing Philadelphia communities hope through art. MAP engages over 100 Philadelphia communities each year in the transformation of neighborhoods through the mural-making process.

MAP has grown exponentially since the early 1980s when Jane Golden first began approaching writers and graffiti gangs to engage their raw talents in a constructive way. MAP's acclaimed art education and prevention and prison programs now serve as models throughout the world. In addition, muralists from around the world come to Philadelphia to be trained in mural-making. And many local muralists trained by MAP are now traveling to cities and countries throughout the globe because of their expertise in leading large-scale mural projects. Because of MAP, Philadelphia has become synonymous with murals, and murals have never been more popular.

MAP's success is in large part due to its faith in three simple words, three words Jane Golden herself uses as a personal and professional mantra: *Art Saves Lives*. It is with this conviction that MAP looks forward to continually enhancing its programs and embarking on special initiatives that will continue to challenge and inspire the many individuals whose lives are touched by Philadelphia's murals.

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