



## 2020 OFFICE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS ▶ YEAR IN REVIEW

In a year unlike any other, The Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) worked to produce safe and meaningful programs in Jersey City. As COVID-19 shuttered arts venues and postponed festivals, online offerings blossomed. Residents had the opportunity to tour galleries and join events in a new, digital way. The 30th Anniversary of the Jersey City Art and Studio Tour hosted four full days of virtual programs, allowing art enthusiasts access to gallery shows like never before. The Apple Tree House released an extensive archive of pre-recorded scholar talks. “Women of Action” were honored for their service to Jersey City and flags were raised at City Hall through virtual ceremonies.

OCA participated in many aspects of the City’s COVID-19 relief efforts, coordinated discussions around a new Arts and Culture Trust Fund, and joined weekly discussions with the arts community.

This was also a year of expansion for the OCA. The Bethune Center and the Jersey City Mural Arts Program (MAP) joined The Office of Cultural Affairs in 2020.



# ▶ EVENT PERMIT OFFICE

In 2020, the Office of Cultural Affairs received over 200 permit requests for special events ranging from cultural festivals, parades and processions, farmers and flea markets, religious and prayer services, flag raisings, park events and block parties. Though quite a few events were planned for 2020, most organizers were forced to cancel or reschedule due to the pandemic.

## Permitted events at a glance:

- **36 Park Events**
- **28 Special Events**
- **6 Farmers Markets**
- **6 Parades/Processions**
- **5 City Events**
- **2 Rallies**

In addition to permitting, Cultural Affairs provides a range of support to Special Event organizers. Support may include on-site staff, planning assistance, use of City equipment, rented equipment, and marketing/advertising.





## ► CITY HALL EVENTS

- **27 Virtual Flag Raisings in 2020**
- **45 Events supported by Cultural Affairs**

Event support includes: Census outreach, press conferences, Health and Human Services programs and Public Safety ceremonies.

Due to the pandemic, 9 Flag Raisings and 31 City events were postponed.



# ▶ JCAST

To celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the largest art tour in the state of New Jersey, the Jersey City Art & Studio Tour (JCAST) hosted a four-day extravaganza of virtual events from October 1 through October 4, 2020.

JCAST highlights Jersey City's dynamic city culture by showcasing our unparalleled arts community and the incredibly talented artists who live and work there.

JCAST Live! Was held for the first time, via Zoom. It featured studio tours, art demos, and panel discussions with artists, arts organizations, and collectives from all over Jersey City, in partnership with Art House Productions. Artivism! Was a series of evening panel discussions held throughout the weekend with the Jersey City Theatre Center.

**JCAST Live!** > A 4-day live event held virtually over Zoom and hosted by JCAST partner, Art House Productions. There were 63 segments, featuring over 150 artists and their works of art, sculpture, jewelry, music, dance & performance art as well as panels and DJ sets

**JCAST Artivism** > Two days of curated panel discussions produced by our partners at the Jersey City Theatre Center. In this series, JCTC invited community leaders, educators, and artists to take part in a conversation about activism and social justice in the context of film, visual arts, and theatre

**Self-Guided Tours** > JCAST offered a variety of outdoor, socially distanced (with masks required) art events across the city including:

- Jersey City Parks Coalition & @Walk ByeNature Walk Art Challenge
- Drawing Rooms Public Library Prayer Flags Project & at the Topps Building
- Public Art Tour Walking Guide with the Jersey City Mural Arts Program
- WTF Outdoor Gallery
- Pedestrian Plaza's Art & Makers Market

## Participation

- > JCAST Live! - 1460
- > JCAST Artivism - 125
- > Outdoor Exhibition for Passive Viewing - 2175

*"Very well organized and executed."*

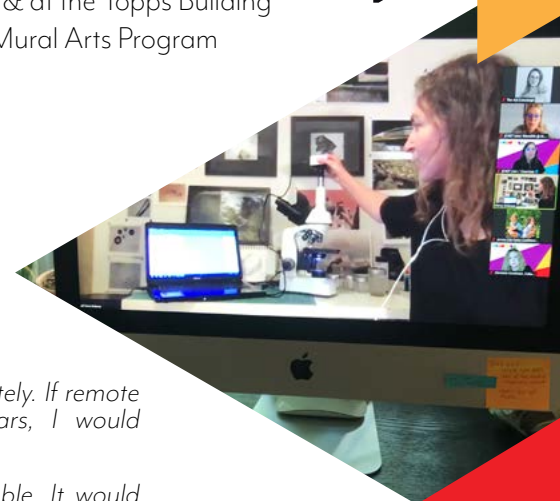
*"It was really cool to be able to see things remotely. If remote viewing were available in non-pandemic years, I would probably see more art each year."*

*"The virtual format was informative and valuable. It would be good to incorporate this format as part of the JCAST programming in the future."*

*"Given the challenges of Covid, I think the fact that JCAST even happened this year is a testament to the Cultural Affairs department."*

*"While it was happening, it felt very live and cross-neighborhood connected."*

For more information on JCAST 2020 [CLICK HERE](#)



# ▶ APPLE TREE HOUSE

In 2020, The Apple Tree House, AKA The Van Wagenen House, was host to:

- ▶ **6 Lectures**
- ▶ **2 Community Meetings**
- ▶ **1 Theater Production**

and the Proud Recipient of:

- ▶ **Action Grant, New Jersey Council on the Humanities**
- ▶ **History Grant, Hudson County Office of Culture and Heritage Affairs, Tourism & Development**

The NJCH Action Grant Award was given to OCA to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. The series was originally planned to include poetry slams, women's history lectures, panel discussions, theater productions, and period replicas. The programming series was to culminate in the Jersey City Public School's annual History Fair featuring women's history research conducted by social studies students Grades 4-12. Due to the pandemic, the remaining programs pivoted to be offered virtually, delivering safe and engaging content to Jersey City residents and beyond.

The Apple Tree House was also featured in Preservation New Jersey's Emmy-nominated film, *Saved or Lost Forever*, a 2020 documentary based on Preservation New Jersey's 10 Most Endangered Historic Places list. The Apple Tree House was highlighted as a top success story for historic preservation in the state of New Jersey.



# ▶ JOHN W. MEAGHER ROTUNDA ART GALLERY

The Rotunda Gallery hosted 9 Exhibitions in 2020

- ▶ **Pro Arts Cooks Group Exhibition**
- ▶ **Unseen Sea, Installation by Poramit Thantplit**
- ▶ **Historic Jersey City Postcards**
- ▶ **Black History Month Group Exhibition**
- ▶ **Women's History Month Group Exhibition**
- ▶ **Pro Arts presents "afloat"**
- ▶ **Hispanic Heritage Exhibition**
- ▶ **Veteran's Day Group Exhibition**
- ▶ **Korean Artists Group Exhibition**
- ▶ **Project 270, Mana Urban Arts project**

In October, curator Greg Brickey gave a virtual tour of the Rotunda's Hispanic Heritage Exhibition to a home audience during JCAST. This tour was well received and gave participating artist the opportunity to discuss their work and artistic process.

Due to the pandemic the gallery was closed for several months.







## ► POET LAUREATE

Rashad Wright, Jersey City's inaugural Poet Laureate, completed his two-year term (2019-2020) in December 2020. For more information on the Poet Laureate's 2 year term 2019/2020, please [CLICK HERE](#)

The City of Jersey City named Susan Justiniano, also known as Rescue Poetix, as the new Poet Laureate (2021-2022). She is a first-generation Puerto Rican poet, spoken word artist, performer, and community leader. She holds the current honor of being the first woman appointed Poet Laureate of Jersey City, and the first Puerto Rican. Her work is "an exploration of the unknown," which is evident in her chapbook, "Exposed". She has recorded over 50 of her original works to music in both English and Spanish under her artist entrepreneurial and business entity, Rescue Poetix. In addition to her artistic entrepreneurship, Rescue Poetix currently serves on boards for West Side Arts & Music, In Full Color, and Word Seed Inc., among others. She is co-founder of the Jersey City based organization, OpenRoad Poetry.

# ► THE BETHUNE CENTER

The Bethune Center became part of the Office of Cultural Affairs in January 2020. Located in the Greenville community of Jersey City, it has become an epicenter for creativity and inspiration. It offers residents and visitors an unparalleled experience to engage in cultural arts, fitness, wellness, and educational activities. Dedicated to preserving the culture of Jersey City and enhancing interactions amongst diverse groups, The Bethune Center offers a welcoming atmosphere for adults, seniors, and families. The Center also serves the community by providing space for meetings, workshops, training seminars, and classes, as well as rental space for private events and expos.

In light of the pandemic, The Bethune Center had to find a balance between safety and functionality. It continued use as a public meeting facility by allowing community groups, organizations, and Public Safety divisions to congregate under reduced capacity. It also took full advantage of the courtyard and parking lot for low-crowd activities such as back-to-school drives, toy drives, book signings, and street festivals.

## Highlights from 2020 include:

**Mary McLeod Bethune Park** > Construction began on the new park in May of 2020. It will include a stage, a picnic area, playground, relaxation area and a monument of Mary McLeod at the entrance

**Book Signing** > Al Sharpton's new book *Rise Up: Confronting a Country at the Crossroads*

**Upgrades** > Cosmetic upgrades which included painting, upgrading the sound system, addition of a weight room and reorganization of the *Wall of Pioneers* gallery

- > **Firemen & Police Training**
- > **Ward F Toy Drive**
- > **Virtual Online Classes**

For a full report on 2020 please visit [Bethune Center Year in Review](#)





# ► MURAL ARTS PROGRAM

As of October 2020, The Jersey City Mural Arts Program (JCMAP) became part of the Office of Cultural Affairs. JCMAP serves to inspire people through public art. From local to international artists, Jersey City's mural arts program is one of the most expansive and diverse in the nation and continues to be a citywide success. Initiated in 2013 and funded by a Clean Communities Grant, JCMAP is a Mayor's Office initiative that links established and emerging local, national and international mural artists with property owners city-wide as part of an innovative beautification program that reduces graffiti, engages local residents and is transforming Jersey City into an outdoor art gallery.

The JCMAP programs typically start in early spring. Due to COVID-19 the following were cancelled and/or postponed to 2021:

## 2020 Programs

**Rubik's Cube Week** > Postponed until 2021

- > Partnership with Liberty Science Center
- > Rubik's cube scavenger hunt
  - Call for art for local artists
  - 10 Rubik's cube themed murals on utility boxes in every ward
  - Interactive game where users will use their mobile devices to take photos of the murals to collect them all and win a prize from Liberty Science Center
- > Projection mapped light display - partnership with CANVS

**Call for Art** > 507 Summit Avenue, JSQ

**Call for Art** > Berry Lane Park Silos

**Jersey City's Sister Cities** > Postponed until 2021

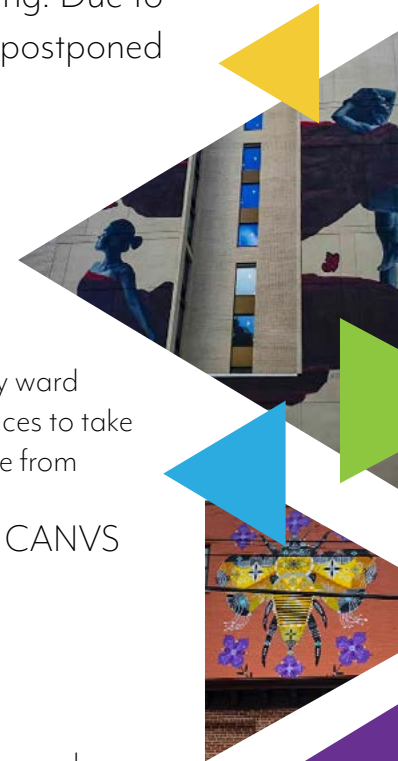
- A workshop series and public art program for youth focused on the City of Jersey City's Sister Cities around the world

## Existing Mural Repairs

## Mural Arts Calendar

- In December 2020 JCMAP murals were featured in an interactive 13-month calendar. These calendars were created in partnership with Timeline Promotions and distributed free to Jersey City residents.

To view the mural calendar please [CLICK HERE](#)



# ► COVID-19 RESPONSE EFFORTS

At the beginning of the pandemic, The Office of Cultural Affairs curbed programming to provide critical support for Jersey City's COVID-19 response efforts.

- **Staffed call center for COVID-19 testing**
- **Conducted contact tracing**
- **Supported Meals on Wheels**
- **Registered residents for the Census at COVID-19 testing sites**
- **Hosted a weekly testing site at The Bethune Center**
- **Supported COVID-19 Relief Grants for Artists**

