

March 3, 2020

Contact: Tara Hernandez, Marketing & Communications Director
(616) 233-6053 or thernandez@grr.org

Ford Airport Unveils Art Program Highlighting Local Artists



(Above): Artist Nick Nortier begins stenciling and painting for his mural, "The Great Blue" that will be along the Concourse B walkway in the post-security area.

Grand Rapids, Mich. – The Gerald R. Ford International (GFIA) Airport is unveiling a new art program that will feature local West Michigan artists, scenery, sculptures, and exhibits.

For its debut, the program will feature two live muralists – Grand Rapids native Nick Nortier, and Grand Rapids-based artist Kyle DeGroff. Nortier's painting, "The Great Blue," will feature a blue heron on a Michigan waterway with a stunning purple and orange sunset in the background. Nortier says he believes the blue heron is one of the most beautiful creatures in Michigan, and the mural is both an ode to the heron and the Great Lakes.

"This mural is one of the largest interior walls I have ever painted and in an area with an immense amount of foot traffic - thousands of people come through every day," said Nortier. "I am excited to have this opportunity to leave my mark at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, and I look



forward to being a part of the inaugural team of artists for this new program.”

The Airport Art Program is in partnership with the Frey Foundation which focuses grantmaking efforts on art in the local community. The Foundation’s commitment to the Airport came through a donation to the [Gateway Transformation Project](#). The program will feature rotating exhibitions, and the initial mural space will change periodically.

“The Frey Foundation is thrilled to support local and diverse artistic expression in the Gerald R. Ford International Airport,” said Holly Johnson, President of the Frey Foundation. “It serves as a gateway to our community, welcoming both first time visitors and long-time residents alike. The addition of public art installations, such as the mural by Nick Nortier, help create a sense of place, highlighting the unique culture as well as the talent and creativity abundant in our great city.”

DeGroff’s mural will be on the walkway to Concourse A and features bold, bright colors and animals in slumber.

“With the Gateway Transformation Project we added over 59,000 square footage with our new security checkpoint, restaurant space, hallways, and more,” said Gerald R. Ford International Airport President & CEO Tory Richardson. “The spaces where these artists are working will liven up our walls, transform the guest experience, and showcase the talented artists we have here in West Michigan. We are proud to partner with the Frey Foundation to encourage community engagement in cultural experiences.”

Other future art installations include a sculpture by Grand Rapids artist Jason Quigno depicting traditional Native American symbolism in Michigan, set to be unveiled in Summer 2020. “The President Ford Mural” by Grand Rapids artist Paul Collins will be re-installed on the east end of the Airport lobby near Valet Parking this Spring. Additionally, a replica “Le Grande Vitesse” by artist Alexander Calder and a Calder plane will be placed in the front lobby areas after Gateway Transformation Project Phase II is complete in August 2020.

For more information or interviews, please contact Tara Hernandez.

###

About GFIA

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) is the second busiest airport in Michigan. The Airport served over 3.58 million passengers in 2019 and over 9,000 travelers pass through GFIA each day. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport offers nonstop service to 34 major market destinations with more than 140 daily nonstop flights. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is managed and operated by the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority. GFIA generates over \$3.1 billion in annual economic output throughout West Michigan and employs over 2,000 people. For more information on GFIA visit: www.flyford.org or follow the airport on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter: @FlyGRFord