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NEW MURAL TO GRACE STRAWBERRY WAY

WHO GETS TO EAT THE MOST FRUIT? BY ARTIST JULIE MALLIS ENLIVENS BUSY DOWNTOWN ALLEY

Downtown Pittsburgh – The busiest pedestrian walkway in Downtown Pittsburgh is receiving a brand-new makeover featuring a large-scale mural on the street. Pittsburghers may remember the popular, colorful abstract mural which graced Strawberry Way for the past two years. With wear and tear the art was recently removed to make way for a brand new art installation entitled *Who Gets To Eat The Most Fruit?* by Pittsburgh-based artist Julie Mallis. The mural is a project of Envision Downtown, a partnership between the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership and the City of Pittsburgh, with technical assistance from the Office of Public Art.

“We love to introduce new art into Downtown and have been extremely pleased with the success of Strawberry Way as a place for people to congregate, eat, and socialize while enjoying the art. We are thrilled to work with Julie Mallis on this new installation,” said Jeremy Waldrup, President and CEO of the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership. “Public art plays an important role in cities, this new work is vibrant and playful while allowing the audience to have a discussion about equity and inclusivity, a dialogue that needs to be encouraged.”

The installation provides an opportunity for interactivity, engagement and beautification. Mallis has created a beautiful, abstract mural that becomes contagious as it features a self-explanatory game modeled after the classic favorite “the floor is lava.” No directions or rules are needed, as hopping from fruit to fruit along the pathway is second nature to the audience.

The fruit shapes that create the pathway across the alley feature seven local fruits to Pittsburgh and introduce them as they come into season, beginning with strawberry itself, it continues into cherries, peaches, watermelons, grapes, apples and pears. For this second incarnation of the Strawberry Way Mural Project, the art extends one block further, including the block from Smithfield Street to Liberty Avenue.

Julie Mallis explains: “This project has allowed me a chance to create more spaces that are free and welcome to kids of all ages, while adding some serious vibrancy, color and playfulness to an alley. It was important to me that this mural is not just a pretty image to take a selfie with, but something that is physically engaging and mentally stimulating to encourage people to think about questions we desperately need to contend with today, such as the balance of power and resources. “I’ve always wanted to add colorful imagery to our sometimes stuffy built environment, and provide more places that encourage people to play, and are welcoming to kids, who are often not welcome in most spaces.”

Not only is this mural fun, interactive and helps to brighten the alley, it provides an opportunity to engage in deeper philosophical questions, to continue the artistic experience from a fleeting moment, to dinner table discussion. The questions have no right or wrong answers. At one end of the mural, toward Grant St, the mural reads: “Who’s missing from your table”, a nod to the physical tables which are set up from April through October along the alley. Toward Liberty Avenue, “Who gets to eat the most fruit?” is asked. This question not only provides a prompt for the game, but posits a question of equity and power.

The Strawberry Way Mural project was initiated in 2016, with the piece *City Composition* by artist Deanna Mance and was initially funded with support from Colcom Foundation. This year’s project has been supported with a generous paint donation from PPG Paints. It is anticipated that the mural will be completed by mid-August.

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About the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership

Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP) is a dynamic, nonprofit organization comprised of business and community leaders, property owners, civic organizations, foundations and residents who provide energy, vision and advocacy for Downtown Pittsburgh. Working collaboratively with its partners, the PDP strives to create a positive Downtown experience for residents, workers and visitors alike. The PDP's strategic initiatives include clean and safe services, transportation, and economic development and advocacy. For more information, visit www.DowntownPittsburgh.com, follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/downtownpitt> and "like" us on Facebook.

About Envision Downtown

Envision Downtown is a public/private partnership between the Mayor's Office and the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership formed to accelerate Downtown's economic growth and competitiveness. Envision's mission is to advance mobility and livability in Pittsburgh's central neighborhoods, by making it safer, more attractive and convenient for everyone to get to, through and around Downtown. The initiative leverages a team of committed civic leaders and a robust data development program to implement a series of short-term, accelerated infrastructure projects with the goal of informing longer-term transformation changes to the City's mobility networks.

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