

Walking Tour 4: The city art scene

Text by KATHLEEN O'BRIEN, Graphic by MICHAEL GUILLÉN, Photos by SCOTT LITUCHY ♦ Tour guide VICTOR DAVSON, executive director of Aljira

Newark has yet to develop a dense concentration of galleries that cater to walk-in clientele. Instead, its artists, like plants that thrive despite the absence of formal gardens, find ways to exhibit in unconventional spaces. Whether a radio station hallway or a store's back wall, art makes its way into the city's nooks and crannies. It's available to view – so long as you know where to look. (Hours can be erratic, with weekends generally seeing more activity.)



The Paul Robeson Galleries

1. Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art stands like a pioneering homesteader on Broad Street across from Military Park. Here you might see a giant whale egg made from beads, fantastical flying insects sculpted from melted plastic toys, or simple, two-toned paintings that drive home a powerful point about immigration. Artists often come from underrepresented communities – including a special program for artists over the age of 60. (591 Broad St.)

2. Radio station WBGO (88.3 FM) uses its office wall space to display six shows a year. "I just get creative with it as I go along," says Dorthaan Kirk, in charge of community relations and special events. Recent exhibits included historic photographs of jazz great Benny Carter — with everyone from President Clinton to musicians asleep in a tour bus. Although the gallery sometimes features jazz-related artwork, it often casts a wider net. (54 Park Place)

3. Newark Art Supply sells professional-quality art supplies, and encourages the art community by displaying works in the rear of the store. Co-owners Ade and Chris Sedita willingly reconfigure floor space for the occasional show. (61 Halsey St.)



Exhibit at Aljira

4. City Without Walls is the city's oldest not-for-profit gallery, specializing in contemporary art. Visitors may see anything from a nonviolent video game done in partnership with high school students, to photographs of the Pulaski Skyway, to portraits done in the classical "trois crayons" technique. Looking to buy? Browse through racks of copies already framed and packaged in bubble-wrap carrying cases. CWOW also runs a satellite gallery at Seton Hall Law School. (6 Crawford Place)

1/8 MILE
500 FEET

4

W. KINNEY ST.

UNIVERSITY AVE.
WASHINGTON ST.

Essex Co. College

RAYMOND BLVD.

WARREN ST.

Rutgers Univ. (Newark campus)

BLEEKER ST.

CENTRAL AVE.

JAMES ST.

NEWARK

New Jersey Institute of Technology

6

280

21

EAST NEWARK

HARRISON

Passaic River

MCCARTER HWY.



City Without Walls

5. The Paul Robeson Galleries have their main space on the lower floor of the Rutgers campus center, and little mini-galleries on the upper level. "I like exhibits out of which we can get a good lesson," said Jorge Daniel Veneciano, the gallery director. The main space's "Rumble Room" (nicknamed because of the drone of abutting ventilation equipment) shows examples of the up-and-coming field of video art. One of the upstairs pocket galleries displays images from the AIDS collection, a project documenting the impact of the disease. Check out the grim imitation of traditional Dutch still-lives, in which the ever-present bowl of fruit is joined by the jarring sight of a plate full of AIDS medications. (Paul Robeson Campus Center)

6. The Newark Museum is the granddaddy of Newark art spaces, offering not only classic American paintings, but also permanent exhibits from Africa, Korea and Japan. Tucked discreetly into its complex are formal gardens and an 18th-century schoolhouse — the city's oldest. After annexing the Ballantine mansion, originally the home of the brewery magnate Ballantines, the museum has used its rooms to re-create the typical domestic decor of the Victorian era. (49 Washington St.)