

PUBLIC ART AS CIVIC INFRA- STRUCTURE

Department of Arts,
Culture & Media

Rm: EN 216

Rebecca Pauline Jampol
Adjunct Professor
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Class Website:
acmgd.info/dc

Office hours:
By appointment

Department of Arts,
Culture & Media
Chair: Ned Drew

Course pre-requisites:
As specified by major sequence

*This course is a BFA in
Graphic Design Requirement.

Using design to investigate the impact of public art in Newark, New Jersey through place, community, and data.

“Like libraries, parks, and recreation centers themselves, art-work is part of civic infrastructure, understood as physical structures and spaces, as well as social processes of management and use that animate them.”

LOS ANGELES COUNTY ARTS COMMISSION,
ART AS INFRASTRUCTURE (2018)

“Public art humanizes the built environment and invigorates public spaces. It provides an intersection between past, present, and future, between disciplines, and between ideas.”

AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS,
WHY PUBLIC ART MATTERS (2018)

“Integrating design, creativity, and imagination can create physical infrastructure that impacts social well-being.”

MARIA ROSARIO JACKSON, FORMER CHAIR,
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS (2022–2025)

“When artists work closely with communities, public art has the power to transform our civic infrastructure into lively, dynamic spaces that tap into the unique energy of a neighborhood.”

LAURIE CUMBO, FORMER COMMISSIONER, NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS (2022–2025)

“No single view of public space and the art that occupies it will work in a metropolis of multiple perspectives.”

JUDITH F. BACA, CHICANA MURALIST,
EDUCATOR, AND ACTIVIST

“Art in public space asks: whose stories are visible, and whose remain hidden?”

TANIA BRUGUERA, CUBAN INTERDISCIPLINARY
ARTIST AND ACTIVIST

“Our public spaces are as profound as we allow them to be. They are our shared spaces and reflect what matters to us as a community and as individuals.”

CANDY CHANG, ARTIST, DESIGNER,
AND URBAN PLANNER

“Murals can create a space of imagination.”

LAYQA NUNA YAWAR, NEWARK-BASED,
ECUADORIAN MURALIST AND VISUAL ARTIST

“I feel this work is necessary. As keepers of a city, we have a major contribution—more than just painting, we have a contribution to life.”

KWEEN MOORE, NEWARK BASED ARTIST
AND FOUNDER, FEMME CURATOR

“Public art, when it’s participatory, can transform not just walls but whole communities. It’s not just about beautification—it’s about ownership, pride, and safety.”

JANE GOLDEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MURAL ARTS, PHILADELPHIA

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course is a semester-long, partner-based graphic design studio in which Rutgers University–Newark students work in collaboration with civic, cultural, economic development, and institutional partners—including the **City of Newark Division of Arts and Cultural Affairs** and **Department of Economic and Housing Development**—to research, document, interpret, and communicate Newark's public art landscape.

Students will investigate Newark's existing murals, monuments, sculptures, installations, memorials, artist-led projects, and other significant public artworks and cultural sites. This collective research and design process will contribute to the development of a **Public Art Report** for Newark.

The project is both research-driven and design-driven. Students will learn to conduct public art research while developing the visual systems, tools, and strategies needed to organize, interpret, and communicate that research in ways that are useful and accessible to multiple audiences.

The semester will culminate in a comprehensive public-facing report that brings together students' research, documentation, mapping, analysis, and design work to create a resource that can support future planning, stewardship, investment, and engagement with Newark's public art.

Importantly, the course will consider public art not as an isolated cultural product, but as part of a larger civic ecosystem. Students will explore how public art intersects with:

- **Arts and Culture** — artistic practice, cultural history, community identity, and creative networks
- **Community Development** — neighborhood identity, community participation, social connection, and public space
- **Economic Development** — investment, development, downtown vitality, tourism, creative economies, and placemaking
- **Education** — learning environments, public knowledge, youth engagement, and opportunities for arts and civic education
- **Historic Preservation** — landmarks, cultural resources, neighborhood histories, and preservation priorities
- **Public Safety** — access, visibility, lighting, pedestrian experience, wayfinding, maintenance, and stewardship
- **Data and Mapping** — geographic distribution, artwork typologies, artists, commissioning, investment, neighborhood patterns, and other measurable characteristics
- **Public Engagement** — how residents, artists, workers, students, and visitors discover, experience, and interpret public art
- **Civic Infrastructure** — how public art contributes to the identity, legibility, connectivity, and experience of Newark's public realm

COURSE INVESTIGATION

Students will therefore ask not only what public art exists and where it is, but also:

What can public art tell us about Newark?

Where is public art concentrated, and where is it absent?

Who creates it, funds it, commissions it, and maintains it?

How does public art relate to neighborhoods and development?

How do people encounter and use public art?

What stories are represented—and which are missing?

What can data reveal that individual artworks cannot?

How can design make these relationships visible and understandable?

The Central Design Question: **How can design help Newark better document, interpret, preserve, and make accessible its public art—and help the city understand public art as part of its broader civic, cultural, social, and economic landscape?**

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The goal is not simply to produce a beautiful publication about Newark's public art. The goal is to develop a lasting visual and information system through which Newark's public art can be documented, discovered, understood, navigated, and remembered.

The project will combine research, data, storytelling, and design to create a public resource that can serve residents, artists, city agencies, researchers, students, visitors, developers, cultural organizations, and community partners.

RESEARCH THROUGH DESIGN

The course uses design as a method of research, organization, interpretation, and communication to examine Newark's public art landscape.

Following a series of tours, lectures, and fieldwork, students will work through an iterative process:

FIELDWORK > RESEARCH > DATA > INTERVIEWS > ANALYSIS > DESIGN > CLIENT FEEDBACK > PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Through this process, students will investigate not only what public art exists and where it is located, but also who created it, how it came to be, what it means to communities, and how it connects to Newark's history, neighborhoods, development, and public life.

Research will directly inform the design of the final report and its supporting assets—including how artworks are categorized, mapped, documented, interpreted, and made accessible to different audiences.

The goal is to bring together research, data, stories, and design to create a public-facing resource that makes Newark's public art more visible, accessible, and meaningful.

STUDIO STRUCTURE

After completing a series of tours, lectures, and research exercises, students will be divided into three working groups. Each group will have a distinct area of focus, while collaborating to develop a cohesive final report.

1. Visual Identity & Information Design

This group will develop the overall visual language and information-design system for the report. This includes identity, typography, color, mapping, graphic language, photography, data visualization, and information hierarchy. The focus will be on translating complex research into a visual system that is clear, compelling, accessible, and useful to a public audience.

The group will also consider how the report can establish a consistent visual framework for presenting the city's public art and making the larger body of research legible and engaging.

2. Data & Documentation

This group will build from an existing public art audit and focus on documentation, mapping, spatial analysis, concentrations of public art, patterns, and impact across the city.

A particular area of inquiry will be how data can help us better understand the relationship between public art, economic vitality, neighborhood development, and public safety. The City of Newark Division of Arts and Cultural Affairs and the Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC) will provide existing studies, datasets, and other relevant materials.

The goal is not simply to present or visualize data, but to use it as a tool for identifying patterns, asking new questions, uncovering relationships, and developing a deeper understanding of Newark's public art ecosystem.

3. Artist Voices & Oral Histories

This group will bring a more human, narrative, and creative dimension to the report. Through artist interviews, oral histories, and first-person perspectives, students will explore the experiences and stories behind Newark's public art: who made it, why it was created, how artists experienced the process, and how the work has been received and understood over time.

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This component is important to ensuring that the report does not function solely as a data or inventory document. It should also reflect the people, experiences, histories, and perspectives that make Newark's public art ecosystem what it is.

Together, these three areas—Visual Identity & Information Design, Data & Documentation, and Artist Voices & Oral Histories—will contribute to a single, integrated public art report that combines evidence, interpretation, and storytelling.

FINAL DESIGN SYSTEM & DELIVERABLES

The course will culminate in the development of a comprehensive Public Art Report, supported by a coordinated visual identity and a suite of research, documentation, mapping, and public-access tools.

1. Visual Identity & Information Design System

The foundation for the project's visual language, including the project name, typography, color palette, graphic language, photography approach, mapping system, and information-design standards.

2. Public Art Audit & Visual Archive

The research and documentation foundation of the report: a comprehensive inventory of local public artworks, including artwork documentation, locations, artists, dates, media, histories, and other relevant information

3. Research & Historical Context

Essays, timelines, historical research, data, and contextual material that situate Newark's public art within the city's cultural, social, and civic history.

4. Artist Voices & Oral Histories

Artist interviews and oral histories documenting the people, practices, histories, and creative networks behind Newark's public art.

5. Mapping & Data Visualization

A flexible system of citywide, neighborhood, ward, thematic, or other maps and data visualizations that reveal patterns, relationships, histories, and geographic contexts within Newark's public art landscape.

6. Artwork Documentation & Photography

A comprehensive visual record of the artworks, supported by photography, artwork records, captions, and other documentation developed through the audit.

7. Printed Public Art Report

The primary designed publication bringing together the research, archive, essays, artist voices, photography, maps, data visualizations, and historical context into a cohesive public-facing report.

8. Palm Card / Public Access Tool

A simple, accessible physical entry point to the project, using a QR code to connect residents and visitors to the digital report, website, and broader public art archive.

Together, these assets will support a Public Art Conference planned for early 2027 and the development of a Digital Public Art Report & Website (Spring 2027 Course).

REQUIRED READING

Readings will be assigned over the course of the semester, and will be posted to our class website. Our class site is: acmgd.info/dc

DIGITAL POLICY

The responsibility for backing up digital files lies solely with the individual student. Corruption of files containing coursework will not be considered a valid excuse for missing a deadline. It is each student's responsibility to consistently back up work on multiple devices in case of file corruption, disk or computer failure.

PREPARATION FOR CLASS

Students are to be prepared at the start of each class with assigned work and supplies. This includes the presentation of sketches and comps for projects, in required form, for class critiques. Students who are not prepared

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and do not participate in class critiques or individual discussions with faculty when scheduled to do so should not expect private critiques at a later date. Students are also responsible for the knowledge and practice of tools, materials and methods previously covered in class. Students who miss lectures and class discussion due to absences must obtain notes and assignments for subsequent classes from a responsible student prior to the next class period. While I will be happy to clarify information for students who are confused, I cannot repeat lectures or elaborate project descriptions on an individual basis. Students should make every attempt to obtain general information from classmates before discussing details with me. For students who need to reach me outside of class time, my email address is listed above on the top right of this handout.

DEADLINES

This course is structured so that all work can be completed during a normal semester. There will be no incomplete grades given without a serious, documented excuse. Completion of ALL required projects is mandatory to pass the course. Any project not completed by the deadline must be turned in by the beginning of the next class at which time it will automatically receive one grade lower. All projects must be handed in at the deadline but may be further developed and refined for the final review. The new grade assigned will be the average of the original and new project.

ATTENDANCE

Consistent and prompt attendance develops responsible professional behavior and ensures that students have access to the full range of experiences and information necessary to complete class assignments and acquire the skills and knowledge emphasized in a university education.

Attendance is required during scheduled class periods. Punctual arrival, effective use of the full studio period, and participation in assigned work are required.

Students are allotted 2 absences per semester to accommodate emergencies, significant events, and documented illness (doctor's note required). Doctor appointments, advisor conferences, trips to supply stores, employment, etc. should not be scheduled to conflict with class.

More than 2 absences will affect the final course grade. Each additional absence will lower the final grade by one letter grade, unless supported by a doctor's note or approved as a pre-arranged excused absence.

The following will also count toward absences:

- 3 instances of lateness = 1 absence
- Arriving more than 1 hour late = 1 absence
- Early departures, excessive break time, lack of participation in assigned studio activities, or not having required homework may count as equivalent to an absence.

Lateness is defined as arriving 10 or more minutes after the start of class or departing before the class has been formally dismissed.

Prolonged illness should be verified by a physician. If a student is unable to attend regularly or complete coursework in a comprehensive and timely manner, withdrawal from the course may be necessary. In some instances, unsatisfactory attendance may result in a failing grade.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Throughout the semester we will use a combination of formative assessment (discussion and critique) leading to summative evaluation (a grade). You are expected to play an active role in this process. Final grades will be determined using the following criteria:

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The quality of your design process:

- + Quality of Research
- + Conceptual Strength
- + Conceptual Development (sketches, roughs, drafts)
- + Attention to Detail / Craft / Presentation of Work
- + Syntactic Quality of Work (form, composition)
- + Semantic Quality of Work (message, communication)
- + Pragmatic Quality of Work (function)
- + Understanding of the role of medium & technology as an ever-changing entity
in order to serve communication goals
- + Motivation
- + Successful completion of all Final Deliverables

Your professionalism and conduct (as a member of the studio):

- + Participation in Critiques / Discussions
- + Written Articulation
- + Verbal Articulation
- + Overall Attitude
- + Class Attendance / Punctuality
- + Deadlines / Class Preparation
- + Respect for your work and the work of others
- + Meeting Objectives of Assignments
- + Mastery of the objectives of the course

GRADING

The grading system for this course is the following:

- A Excellent without exception
- B+ Well above average
- B Above average
- B- Above average
- C+ Average
- C Average
- C- or below, failing
- INC Incomplete

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS CLASS

- + Self-advocate. If you do not understand something, or need help, make your project advisors and classmates aware of the situation. This is part of the collaborative approach to a "learning community."
- + Set individual progress milestones as well as meeting those held in common within the class.
- + Be flexible in your problem-solving approaches.
- + Develop project management and organizational strategies or seek out help to it to do so, if you lack these skills.
- + Be willing to tutor another student if you have knowledge or skills that would be useful to help them progress.
- + Critique constructively and do not offer false praise.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USAGE

AI-generated content must not replace original creative work or core design decisions. While AI tools may be used to support the creative process, their use must be guided by critical thinking and thoughtful reflection. Students who choose to use these tools are fully responsible for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in their work. Furthermore, all AI-assisted content must be clearly documented in an appendix. Please refer to the **ACM-GD Policy** addendum on **AI Tools Usage Guidelines** at the end of this document for detailed instructions and ethical considerations.

ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT

Rutgers University-Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further its mission of access and support:

For Individuals Experiencing Disability: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with students with medical, physical, and/or mental conditions who encounter disabling barriers to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations for access. Students who have completed the process with ODS and have approved accommodations are provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) specific to each course. To initiate accommodations for their course students must both provide the LOA and have a conversation with the course instructor about the accommodations. This should occur as early in the semester as possible. More information can be found at the RU-N ODS website (ods.newark.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS at (973) 353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-5063 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Short-term Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can help with absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, recovery from surgery, etc.). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking.

Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University's Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures located at <https://uec.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/60-1-33-current-1.pdf>

For support related to Interpersonal Violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) can provide any student with confidential support. VPVA is a confidential resource and does not have a reporting obligation to Title IX.

Students can call the office at (973) 353-1918 or email run.vpva@rutgers.edu. VPVA also maintains a confidential text-based helpline available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support. Students do not need to be a victim/survivor of violence to receive assistance; any student can receive services, information, and support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a plan of support plan and address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Connect with the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

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For Psychological Support (Stress, Mood, Family Issues, Substance Use concerns and other personal challenges): The Rutgers University-Newark Counseling Center provides individual therapy and support groups for students dealing with psychological issues. To schedule an appointment, email counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or call (973) 353-5805.

Additional support is available to any RU-N student through Uwill services:

- Umatch: Teletherapy with flexible scheduling, starting with a free account.
- Uhelp: Crisis support at 833-646-1526 (available 24/7/365).
- Urise: Wellness-based video collection with a free account.

Access Uwill@RUN at <https://my.rutgers.edu> using your netid.
Services are confidential and free.

For emergencies, call 911 or Rutgers University Police Department at (973) 353-5111.

LEARNING RESOURCES**Rutgers Learning Center
(tutoring services)**

Hahne & Co.
54 Halsey Street, Newark, NJ
Room 245
973-353-5608
<https://sasn.rutgers.edu/learning-center-tutoring>

**The Writing Center
(tutoring & writing workshops)**

Hahne & Co.
54 Halsey Street, Newark, NJ
Room 245 & 250
973-353-5849
nwc@newark.rutgers.edu