

Alexandria Public Art Walking Tour 2021

Overview

- This tour explores some of Alexandria's public art, including some temporary art installed in 2021.
- Please note that this is just a sampling of public art in Alexandria. There are many more fascinating pieces within the City.
- The route is about 2.7 miles long. Nine pieces are discussed below.
- Go to <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/35762129> for cuesheets or turn-by-turn directions.

1. Brio in Market Square, 300 King Street

Starting point: at Brio, near the corner of King and N. Fairfax Streets.

Brio, by artist Jimilu Mason, was a gift to the city in the early 1980s from the Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association through a grant from R. Sherrard Elliot, Jr. and his wife.

Jimilu "Mimi" Mason was an American sculptor. She was born in 1930 in Las Cruces, New Mexico; received her bachelor's degree in fine arts from George Washington University in 1953; and died in 2019. She lived and worked in Alexandria, Virginia, where she operated a frame shop in addition to her studio.



Mason was known for her busts of notable American figures of the 1960s, including President Lyndon B. Johnson. Her bust of Frederick M. Vinson resides in the Supreme Court Bust Collection, and she also has a bust on display at the Kennedy Center. Her final piece was a memorial to 9/11.

Sources: <https://alexandrialivingmagazine.com/news/mirror-mirror-to-come-down-in-early-november-2019/>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimilu_Mason.

*Head east, go down the stairs, and turn left to head north on N. Fairfax Street, staying on the westside sidewalk. Cross Cameron Street and walk west, using the sidewalk on the north side of Cameron Street. Stop at the bench outside of **305 Cameron Street**.*

2. George Washington Bench at Duvall House, 305 Cameron Street

Stopping point: by the bench.

Russell Simonaro William Duvall owned and operated a tavern at 305 Cameron Street. The "Gentlemen of Alexandria" threw a massive party for George Washington at Duvall's Tavern on New Year's Eve 1783 after he resigned his commission as commander in chief. Duvall House is a historic landmark in the heart of Old Town Alexandria, and is available for short-term rental on Airbnb and HomeAway/VRBO.



The current owners of Duvall House commissioned and imported a custom bronze statue of a youthful Lieutenant Colonel George Washington sitting on a bench, taking a breather in the Ohio Valley from his exploits - and learning experiences/mistakes - during the French and Indian War.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/305CameronStreet/>.

*Continue west on the northside sidewalk of Cameron Street. Cross N. Washington Street at the traffic light and continue on Cameron Street. Cross N. Columbus Street at the traffic light and continue on Cameron Street. Turn left onto N. Alfred Street. Cross King Street and turn right. Walk west on King Street, using the sidewalk on the south side of the street. The next stop is **Bloomers**, at 924 King Street – more specifically, the butterfly on the side of Bloomers that faces S. Patrick Street.*

3. Butterfly mural at Bloomers, 924 King Street

Stopping point: in front of the mural, on the S. Patrick Street side of the building.

Artist and entrepreneur Tasha Wahl had a fledgling idea: She wanted to start a micro-philanthropy movement that combined Mahatma Gandhi's popular concept, "Be the change you want to see in the world" with Edward Lorenz's "Butterfly Effect" theory that even the softest flutter of a wing can affect the molecules around it, setting off a chain reaction that produces major change. The result was The Butterfly Effect, founded in 2013 with the mission to promote contagious generosity through interactive art in communities all over the world.

Today, the Butterfly Effect has raised money for over 500 charitable organizations throughout the United States and globally, and has empowered countless individuals to make a difference.

In 2019, Alexandria Vice Mayor Elizabeth Bennett-Parker created an innovative fundraising event for Alexandria nonprofits. Over a dozen volunteers helped paint the giant butterfly on a hot day in June. Volunteers began their morning by applying hundreds of pieces of tape to four stencils each approximately four by six feet. The stencils were placed on the wall on the Patrick Street side of Bloomers, a base coat was painted on, the stencils were removed, and volunteer artists painted in the butterfly.



Sources: <https://butterflyeffectbethechange.com/>; <https://thezebra.org/2019/06/29/can-art-change-the-world/>.

*Continue west on King Street, staying on the southside sidewalk. The next stop is **Imagine Artwear**, at 1124 King Street – more specifically, the mural on the side of Imagine Artwear that faces S. Fayette Street.*

4. Love Is All You Need mural at Imagine Artwear, 1124 King Street
Stopping point: in front of the mural, on the S. Fayette Street side of the building.

Carol Supplee owns Imagine Artwear and is active in KiSMET, the King Street Metro Enterprise Team that helped develop the upper area of King Street. She had a blank wall and a desire to honor her fellow business people, so she reached out to artist Len Garon. Garon began painting the mural in October 2019 and finalized it on December 4, 2020.



The mural's theme is Love Is All You Need, a Beatles reference that embodies so much of the community in Alexandria. From left to right, the mural features: Hobbes, Carol's dog and Chief Marketing Officer and Sales Associate for Imagine, flying an airplane; Carol standing with Peggy Amsterdam, of The American Freedom Train Foundation, on a trip to China in 1988; Nina Tisara, former KiSMET President, and Carol's father, Red Supplee, Former President of the Chamber of Commerce and "Man of the Year" in 1986; Joe Egerton, of Arts Afire Glass Gallery, in front of the Tiffany Tavern; the annual First Night fireworks at the Masonic Memorial; David Martin and the Old Town street signs he championed along each block; a canopy of flowers representing King Street Garden Park; Ann Hopkins, who was involved in a Supreme Court case in 1984; the horse-in-the-truck statue outside the Hard Times Café, for the owners Jim and Fred Parker. These images represent key moments for Alexandria, its people, and its businesses.

Source: <https://thezebra.org/2020/12/04/kismet-mural-unveiled-with-ribbon-cutting/>.

*Turn right, cross King Street, and head north on N. Fayette Street. Turn right onto Queen Street. Turn left onto N. Columbus Street. Cross Wythe Street and turn right, using the northside sidewalk to head east on Wythe Street. The next stop is the mural across the street at **Rubini Jewelers**, at 632 N. Washington Street.*

5. Come Together mural, at Rubini Jewelers, 632 N. Washington Street

Stopping point: across the street from the mural, on the Wythe street side of the building.

In the days after George Floyd's killing at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, T.C. Williams rising junior Shelby Bavin felt frustrated. She wanted to show her support for the Black Lives Matter movement in a tangible way, but social media felt insufficient. Instead, she began thinking about a mural on Alexandria's streets – one that would send the message of unity that she wanted to convey.

Bavin, 16, asked a few business owners if they'd let her use their building as a canvas. Then, the coxswain for the T.C. Williams rowing team thought of Jaime Rubini. Rubini, who owns Rubini's Jewelers on the corner of Wythe and Washington streets, is a coach for the T.C. rowing team, and the jewelry store, which sells rowing-themed jewelry, is located blocks from the boathouse. Rubini and his daughter, Joanna, also a former rower, agreed to the plan.



Bavin and her friend Caroline Mitchell, 17, a rising senior and fellow aspiring artist, got to work. Mitchell, who visited the Sistine Chapel in Italy last summer, landed on an idea with echoes of the famed chapel's ceiling - a black hand and a white hand, reaching toward one another, fingers pointed just as they are in Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam," with a spark electrifying what could happen if they united. Purple flowers, painted on to look like they are climbing up the wall, show, "there's room to grow in our society," said Bavin.

"They just did a beautiful job," said Joanna Rubini, who worked closely with the girls to approve the design. She wanted the hands to touch. The girls resisted - they wanted to show progress still needed to be made – and finally, they found a compromise. Now, a spark hovers over both fingers, showing the potential of what unity could bring.

It took eight days for the project to be completed, days when the girls climbed scaffolding. To raise money for it, the girls designed and sold "Black Lives Matters" T-shirts that they had designed, with the proceeds going to scaffolding and supplies.

Jaime Rubini said he was impressed by the initiative both girls showed in making the project come to fruition. "They were go getters," he said. Customers have noticed: "They will come in and they love it, and they want to know who did it," he said.

Source: <https://www.tcwcrew.org/home>.

*Continue east on Wythe Street and cross N. Washington Street. Continue east on Wythe Street for one block, then turn left onto N. St. Asaph Street. Turn right onto Madison Street, staying on the southside sidewalk. Stop halfway down the block at **City Sweep**.*

6. City Sweep, at Harris Teeter, 735 N. St. Asaph St.

Stopping point: in front of the artwork, on the Madison Street side of the building.



City Sweep, by Bernard Collin, consists of three stainless steel panels, each measuring 12 feet high by 8 feet wide. The artwork depicts iconic images and cultural hot spots of historical Alexandria, as well as nearby Washington DC.

Here's how the artist describes his artistic

process: "For as long as I can remember, I've been drawn to metal. Growing up in the fertile countryside of Burgundy, France, on my family's 500 year old estate La Boutière, I was first inspired to give form to my creations, as if an integral part of nature. First with the torch, welder and forge, then with the modern marvel, the electric plasma cutter, which enables me to express myself in fine detail. I opt only to use a hand-held plasma cutter. Having a computer duplicate my design is much too impersonal. It is important that every detail be my own, cut with precision and love. Each piece has its own personality."

Sources: <http://www.bernardcollin.com/project-for-old-town-alexandria-virginia.html>;
<http://www.bernardcollin.com/about-uscontact.html>.

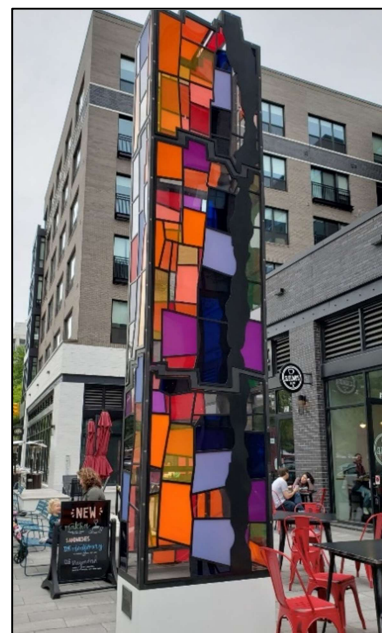
*Continue east on Madison Street. Turn left onto N. Pitt Street, staying on the westside sidewalk. Cross Montgomery Street and turn left, heading west on the northside sidewalk. Stop halfway down the block at **Plinth**.*

7. Plinth, at Gables Old Town, 525 Montgomery St.

Stopping point: sidewalk in front of the artwork.

Plinth, by Tom Fruin, is a mosaic pillar at the entrance to The Gables, the retail and rental apartment community located at 525 Montgomery Street and built in 2019. It was installed by the building's developer as part of its community benefits contributions tied to development approvals.

Plinth is an abstract map of the Alexandria Canal that ran just north of Montgomery Street from the Potomac River on its way to Washington DC. The sculptor, Tom Fruin, is a contemporary American artist whose work is represented in many national and international museums and collections including the Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf, Germany; the Richard J. Massey Foundation for Arts and Sciences in New York, NY; and the Buenos Aires Design Center in Argentina. He is especially known for his work with reclaimed and



scavenged materials, like the 2012 Watertower built of Plexiglas and steel, and located in Brooklyn.

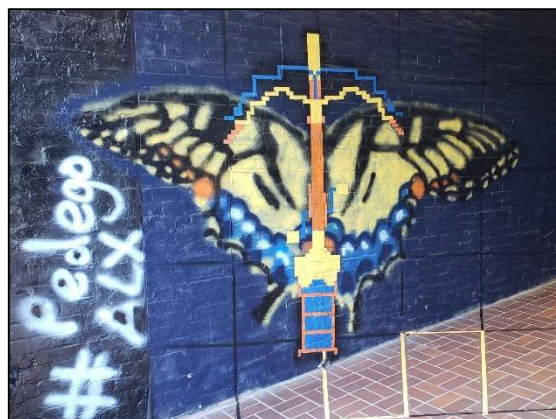
Source: <https://www.oldtownnorthalliance.com/news/tom-fruin-sculpture-is-a-significant-donation-to-public-art-in-old-town-north>.

Do a u-turn and head east on Montgomery Street. Turn right onto N. Fairfax Street. Turn left onto Queen Street. Turn right onto N. Lee Street, staying on the westside sidewalk. Just before you reach Cameron Street, stop at the Pedego store on your right.

8. Mural at Pedego

Stopping point: sidewalk in front of the store.

From Todd Ketch, store owner: “My daughter Elise created the mural. It has a hidden bicycle in it. It was inspired by the 8-bit videogame Tron, and if you take a picture from a specific angle, it makes it look like anything in front of it is floating on a flat grid.”



*Continue south on N. Lee Street for one block, staying on the westside sidewalk. Turn right into Ramsey Alley and stop at the **Old Town Alexandria mural**.*

9. Old Town Alexandria mural

Stopping point: in front of the mural.



Painted by muralist and Alexandria-based artist Meg Biram, the mural includes a rainbow of colors and text reading “Old Town Alexandria.” A bench directly in front of the artwork provides visitors and residents the perfect place to pose for a photo.

The mural was funded by members of the Old Town Boutique District, ALX Community and other area sponsors. OTBD announced the installation of the mural on July 9, 2019, and Biram painted it shortly after.

The project’s purpose is to engage visitors through interactive art that portrays the character of Old Town and its passion for inclusivity, according to a news release.

Source: <https://alextimes.com/2019/07/murals/>.

To return to the starting point, continue west in Ramsey Alley. At the end of the block, you’ll be back at Market Square.

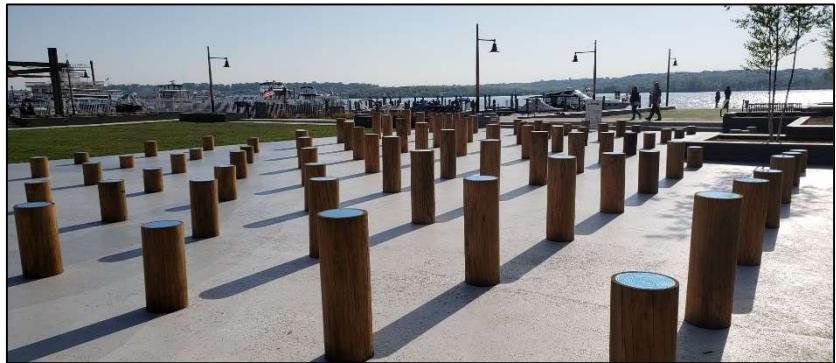
*Optional walk extension to see **Groundswell**: retrace your steps back to N. Lee Street and continue south. Turn left onto King Street, go through the pedestrian-only zone, cross Union Street, and continue one block east to Waterfront Park.*

10. Groundswell at Waterfront Park, 1 Prince Street

Starting point: at Groundswell, the 2021 art installation within the park.

Groundswell, by artist Mark Reigelman, is the third in the Site See: New Views in Old Town annual public art series, and will be on display through November 2021.

Reigelman focused on Alexandria's working waterfront as the shoreline crept further into the Potomac River. Starting in the 18th century, thousands of wood pilings were driven deeper and deeper into the Potomac River over time, thereby shifting the city's waterfront over decades. This allowed Alexandria to develop and grow its sprawling dock into a major commercial port.



Groundswell pays homage to this ever-evolving history and brings an element of play to the shoreline's material topography. The installation features a ground mural depicting the floor of the Potomac River and more than 100 wood pilings throughout the site. The pilings range in heights from 12 to 42 inches, in accordance with the river floor topography or bathymetry. Each 14-inch-diameter piling is topped with a cobalt blue mirrored surface etched with growth rings that suggest the passing of time. They glisten in the light like the nearby water, reflecting the sky, as well as the faces of passersby. Reigelman hopes visitors will be immersed in this shimmering landscape as they navigate through the pilings, considering their place in the city's history.

Reigelman has also exhibited his work at other public sites, galleries and museums across the country. His works have been recognized by the Americans for the Arts as being among the 50 most compelling public works across the country. Reigelman studied Sculpture and Industrial Design at the Cleveland Institute of Art in Cleveland, Ohio and product design at Central Saint Martins University of the Arts in London. The artist lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Source: <https://alexandrialivingmagazine.com/arts-entertainment/waterfront-art-exhibit-groundswell-on-display/>.