

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**FORMAN ARTS INITIATIVE AND MURAL ARTS PRESENT
ANULA SHETTY'S PHILLY DAYDREAMS: STORIES IN TRANSIT**

**AN AMBITIOUS NEW CITYWIDE PUBLIC ART PROJECT IN COLLABORATION WITH SEPTA USING AUGMENTED
REALITY TO ACTIVATE TRANSIT LINES WITH THE DAYDREAMS OF PHILADELPHIANS**

*Works on view on SEPTA Transit Lines and in Short Story Kiosk Dispensers throughout Philadelphia during October
Special multi-channel display in City Hall Station's Oculus commencing October 5th, 2023*



SEPTA Bus Driver: Lovey McIntosh, Philadelphia, PA. Photo courtesy of Anula Shetty

Philadelphia, PA (August 31, 2023) – Forman Arts Initiative (FAI) and Mural Arts (MA) are pleased to announce ***Philly Daydreams: Stories In Transit***, a new augmented reality public art project to be exhibited throughout Philadelphia's transit system by Indian-American artist and filmmaker **Anula Shetty**. The project will be on view through November. Shetty is the inaugural artist-in-residence of **Public Works**, launched by FAI and Mural Arts; the program places artists in Philadelphia government agencies and organizations to develop artwork that forges new connections between the agencies' work and the communities they serve. Since January, Shetty has been working within the **Southern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)**, researching its history and filming stories from employees and commuters across Philadelphia who share intimate glimpses into how daily transit can serve as a space for daydreaming, wonder, and connection.

Through an augmented reality series of works born of Philadelphian stories, daydreams, thoughts, and performances that Shetty has filmed, *Philly Daydreams* allows travelers to be virtually accompanied on their journeys by fellow Philadelphians; QR-triggered photographs taken by Shetty will replace the advertising space on select trains and anyone with a phone can activate a transit story. Shetty's project explores public transportation as a service that unites people through a shared experience. "The goal is to create connections between people who cross paths during their daily commute," Shetty said. "Through *Philly Daydreams*, I want to provide SEPTA riders a moment to hear uplifting stories of human connection and a moment to be moved by a poem or performance, to imagine, and to daydream as I got to during the wonderful process of exploring SEPTA and meeting my inspiring city-mates."

Philly Daydreams, positioned to reach over 500,000 commuters and riders daily, will be displayed throughout the [Broad Street line](#), on digital board screens on [SEPTA Regional Rail lines](#), and along the Girard Avenue [trolley lines](#). [Short Edition's](#) Short Story Dispenser kiosks throughout the city, including in transit hubs, public libraries, and Philadelphia International Airport, will house stories from *Philly Daydreams* participants and submissions from the general public. A special multi-channel presentation of Shetty's films will be projected in City Hall Station's oculus—closed since the pandemic—beginning October 5, 2023. The oculus serves as the central compass of *Philly Daydreams*, giving a collective home to the stories of Philadelphians that originated throughout the city.



Dancer Shaily Dadijala, Philadelphia, PA. Photo courtesy of Anula Shetty

“This collaboration marks our first Public Works project. It has been inspiring to see how, with the guidance of Anula Shetty, SEPTA, and our partners at Mural Arts, such a passionate, diverse group of Philadelphians and local organizations have come together to support this project,” said Michael Forman, co-founder of Forman Arts Initiative. Jennifer Rice, co-founder of Forman Arts Initiative, added, “SEPTA is a crucial part of both the history and future of Philadelphia. We are proud to support art that contributes to the spirit of our city and celebrates such an essential organization in keeping Philadelphians connected.”

To encourage connections following the isolating effects of COVID-19 and to celebrate the collective nature of public transportation, Shetty filmed interviews with SEPTA riders and bus and trolley operators, as well as with poets like Ursula Rucker, local business owners like YOWIE founder Shannon Maldonado, activists, and other cultural leaders, including Street Dept’s Conrad Benner around the theme of “daydreaming in transit.” Shetty shot the interviews in various SEPTA locations and commuter hubs, including inside a historic trolley at the Septa Transit Museum, The Southeast Asian Market in FDR Park, and the network of disused SEPTA tunnels beneath the city.

From these interviews, Shetty created a series of photographs around themes of commuting and daydreaming in Philadelphia transit; photography featuring portraits of riders and transit-related landscapes will line the areas above the windows in many of Philadelphia’s trains, buses, and trolleys, serving as the launchpad for *Philly Daydreams*’s augmented reality. Riders who hold their phone up to these panels will trigger one of Shetty’s filmed interviews to appear on their screen, creating the visual of a fellow rider accompanying them on their journey and sharing their dreams in transit. The interview series will be housed online at anulashetty.com, formanartsinitiative.org, and muralarts.org, where all are encouraged to share their dreams.

“For years, Mural Arts has worked with city government and agencies, witnessing firsthand the power of art to inspire, educate, challenge, and promote social healing and connection,” said Jane Golden, Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia. “We were honored to join forces last year with Forman Arts Initiative to launch Public Works. With *Philly Daydreams*, we see how Shetty puts art to work by engaging with the beauty and complexity of public transit while examining the layers of people’s lives, their journeys, and their quiet moments of meditation, struggle, and aspiration.

“Helping to bring art and transit together is just one way we strive to create an environment that is safe, inspiring, and beautiful,” said SEPTA CEO and general manager Leslie S. Richards. “We are honored to be part of this public art project and are so excited for our customers to see this impressive display in our City Hall Station.”

***Philly Daydreams* Locations:**

Rolling Out Beginning October 2, 2023

*Interacting with *Philly Daydreams* is free to all

Rail:

[Broad Street Line](#)

[Regional Rail Lines](#)

Trolley:

[Trolley Route 15](#)

Short Story Dispensers:

**Philly Daydreams* Interviews will appear in a transcribed format

[Philadelphia International Airport](#)

[Jefferson Station](#)

[Suburban Station](#)

[SEPTA Headquarters](#)

[Parkway Central Library](#)

City Hall Station's Oculus Display:

[Broad Street at Market Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#)

**Philly Daydreams* at City Hall Station's oculus is free to the public

Press Preview: October 5, 2023, 11 AM - 1 PM

Public Hours: October 6 - 8 and October 12 - 15

Thursdays and Fridays: 11 AM - 2 PM

Weekends: 1 PM - 4 PM

About the Artist: Anula Shetty is an award-winning filmmaker and new media artist. She is the founder of Fire Work Media, a production company that uses AR/VR and mobile apps to tell stories about the environment and marginalized communities. She is a 2020 CAAM (Center for Asian American Media) Fellow and a recipient of a Pew Fellowship. She was previously awarded three Media Arts Fellowships from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and was nominated for a USA Artist Fellowship. She received a Project Involve Fellowship, two Independence Foundation Fellowships, and a Leeway Foundation Transformation Award for her art and social change work.

About Forman Arts Initiative: Forman Arts Initiative (FAI), founded by Michael Forman and Jennifer Rice, is dedicated to supporting community-based arts and creativity in Philadelphia through programming, convening, and advocacy. Over the coming years, FAI will serve as a platform to connect, mentor, and support artists and organizations around Philadelphia to deepen and grow the rich cultural heritage of Philadelphia's communities. Since 2021, FAI has been working in partnership with the Philadelphia Foundation to distribute \$3 million in unrestricted funding over five years to community artists and organizations in the Greater Philadelphia Area through a new grantmaking program called Art Works. More FAI initiatives for the city will unfold in the coming months and years. Forman Arts Initiative collaborates closely with DVDL, an agency of cultural strategists, to facilitate the programming and ongoing development of FAI. For more information, visit www.formanartsinitiative.org.

About Mural Arts: Mural Arts Philadelphia is the nation's largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. For over 35 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative and equitable process, creating over 4,000 artworks that have transformed public spaces and individual lives. Mural Arts aims to empower people, stimulate dialogue, and build bridges to mutual understanding through projects that attract artists from Philadelphia and around the world and programs that focus on youth education, restorative justice, mental health and wellness, and public art and its preservation. Popular mural tours offer a firsthand glimpse into the inspiring stories behind Mural Arts' iconic and unparalleled collection, earning Philadelphia worldwide recognition as the "Mural Capital of the World." For more information, call 215-685-0750 or visit muralarts.org. Follow us on social media: @muralarts on Twitter and Instagram, MuralArtsPhiladelphia on Facebook, and phillymuralarts on YouTube.

About SEPTA: The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority is one of the largest transit systems in the United States, serving five counties in the Greater Philadelphia area and connecting to transit systems in Delaware and New Jersey. Its services include regional rail, buses, trolleys, subways and a high-speed line to western suburbs. SEPTA, created by the Pennsylvania legislature in 1963, began operations in 1964. Many of its services and facilities date back further — as far as the early 20th century — and became part of SEPTA through other transportation companies and organizations absorbed during the authority’s first decades.

Philly Daydreams was made possible with the guidance and support of the project organizers Marcellus Armstrong (Program Manager at Forman Arts Initiative), Al'Lee Floyd (Manager, Customer Experience at Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority), Ginger Rudolph (Project Manager, Mural Arts) and Sally Szwed (Director, Arts & Culture at DVDL).

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