



Airport Artist

Dawn Roe is using photography and video to chronicle the expansion at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International.

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Photo By: Dawn Roe

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Her camera is mounted on a tripod. A series of photographs are displayed atop a table; dirt, stones and a small tree-like plant occupy a countertop. A sign reads: “Dawn Roe, artist in residence.” The artist snaps photos underneath flickering lights and loudspeakers as travelers make their way to the luggage carousel on this weekday afternoon.



Roe's studio, for now, is the baggage claim area inside Terminal 1 at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. She snaps another photo. A passerby stops, and they begin to chat. There's a feeling of performance art in the air. Is she really working or just pretending?

The airport expansion is well underway. Three terminals are undergoing renovations, and additional runway space is being built to accommodate large commercial planes. The project, slated for completion in September, is the focus of Roe's unique artist residency.

Last year, the Broward Cultural Division commissioned the Orlando-based artist, through its public art and design program, to record the runway and Terminal 4 expansions. According to Leslie Fordham, public art and design program administrator with the division, this was the first time the program had invited an artist to study and document a county project.

Roe's residency includes three temporary community studios, in which she spends hours working in public view around the airport. The first was in December, the second in May; the third will be in September.

Once Roe completes her artistic investigation, the result will include a series of photographs and digital video footage. Shots will include abstract-like forms, aerial views, blurry groundscapes and detailed close-ups of surrounding plants and wetlands. The video footage will feature noisy action scenes of machinery plowing dirt contrasted with peaceful shots of plants bending in the wind. Roe examines temporality, shifts, slices of moments, while challenging the viewer's perception of them in her work.

Roe's creative process takes shape as the construction workers hammer away. She spends time at their side, hardhat clad, getting the ideal shot, examining details that strike her and collecting things like limestone, dirt and weeds to photograph later. She absorbs the atmosphere.

She has blogged extensively about her experience at betweenthealreadyandthestillmore.blogspot.com. "Setting up a studio space of sorts in a public setting is a bit of a daunting task," she wrote at the beginning of the project, "mostly because it's seen as a somewhat questionable endeavor to both the community and the artist."

Roe's creative process takes shape as the construction workers hammer away.

She continued: "Because this project relies upon repeated visits to the airport construction site and its periphery, certain aspects of my studio practice have become somewhat transportable...I chose to work on things that didn't require too much focus or concentration,





so I would be free to quickly stop what I was doing to chat with visitors or move from one thing to another.”

Relying on the public’s reaction adds an element of unpredictability and is part of the allure. “Of course the response to this kind of experimental studio will certainly differ depending on whether the audience is primarily comprised of museum-goers or hurried travelers,” she wrote. “Certainly a studio within the context of the museum provokes a certain response, whereas the baggage claim area of the

airport prompts quite another.”

An exhibition of Dawn Roe’s work will be on view in the Lee Wagener Gallery in Terminal 2 July-September.

