



*Healing Begins Through Connection*  
by Swoon. Completed 2018.  
Photo by Steve Weinik.  
Project artists, partners and participants posing  
in front of the completed mural.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT BY:

Susannah Laramee Kidd, PhD



## Porch Light Storefronts: Southeast by Southeast and Kensington Storefront

Drop by 2016 S. 8th Street in South Philadelphia and you might find an English as a Second Language class for adults from Burma and Bhutan, who came to the U.S. as refugees. Or, you might find yourself in the midst of a group of recently arrived teens who are working on their language skills by writing poetry, interviewing each other, and taking photos. If you time your visit well, you might also get to purchase Karen, Chin, and Nepali textile crafts and a Nepali lunch.

If you head north to the other side of Center City to 2774 Kensington Avenue, you might find a group of people learning to weave or making a card for a loved one, while others come and go to grab a cup of tea or get free flu shots from nurses. Or, you might find a journaling workshop for trauma survivors that has branched into painting. If you are super lucky, you might also come by when a local spoken word artist and a musician are hosting an open mic night. This storefront, right by the Somerset El stop, caters to people, affectionately called “sunshines” by some of the volunteers, who are housing insecure and suffering from opioid use disorder.

Mural Arts Department  
**Porch Light**

Southeast by Southeast Address:  
**2106 South 8th Street, 1st Floor**

Kensington Storefront Address:  
**2774 Kensington Avenue**

The Mural Arts Institute is supported by The JPB Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

In either storefront, you might also find an artist leading workshops and paint days that will result in a mural or other artwork located nearby. Both of these storefronts are “hubspaces” that operate as part of the Porch Light program. The Porch Light program is a partnership between Mural Arts and the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services that also includes a research-tested behavioral health provider-site model. Each storefront serves a particular population in Philadelphia that experiences health disparities. The teams that run each space use a model that combines social services and arts and cultural programming. In this spotlight, we share the story of how the storefront model took shape. We explore the features of this innovative approach within Mural Arts’ practice of making art with and within communities.

## Collaboration and Experimentation: Developing the Storefront Model

Like any cutting-edge practice and like many of Mural Arts’ approaches, the storefront model came about in the midst of ongoing partnerships and collaborations. In 2011, Mural Arts and artist Shira Walinsky first developed a relationship with social worker Melissa Fogg and the Philadelphia Refugee Mental Health Collaborative. The latter included resettlement agency Lutheran Children and Family Services and Jefferson University Hospital’s Department of Family and Community Medicine. The team came together around a community-based participatory research project. They used photovoice elicitation methods to assess the mental health needs of recently arrived Bhutanese, Burmese, and Iraqi refugees. Then in 2012, Mural Arts received funding from the City of Philadelphia’s Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services to create a mural working with South Philadelphia’s refugee community. Artist Shira Walinsky had the idea of temporarily renting a storefront space in the neighborhood to use for mural-related workshops and to conduct social service programming. Fogg had always wanted to have a space in the neighborhood for outreach and understood the potential for this alternative approach to working with these communities.

The first iteration of the Southeast by Southeast project (Southeast Philadelphia and Southeast Asia) was a partnership between Mural Arts and Lutheran Children and Family Services. Walinsky and artist Miriam Singer conducted printmaking workshops and community events featuring Karen, Chin, and Nepali culture. They sought out artists from among the refugee community to showcase their work and found Karen weavers from Burma and Bhutanese/Nepali dancers. Fogg and LCFS brought volunteers, case aids, and multi-service providers. The activities in the storefront space developed organically.

The team got to know these refugee communities and what kinds of programming would be the most relevant and impactful. Eventually, English-language learning and literacy and citizenship classes emerged as the most pressing needs, as well as an interest in community gathering space and ways to celebrate their home cultures. In 2016, after a number of extensions on the lease and with the closing of Lutheran Children and Family Services, the project turned into a direct partnership between Mural Arts and DBHIDS, who was already funding the initiative.

Meanwhile, Mural Arts considered the success of the Southeast by Southeast project-turned-program and began developing other “hubspace” model projects—The Neighborhood Time Exchange, Tacony LAB, Kensington Storefront, and Northeast Passage.

In 2015, Mural Arts began a storefront residency program on Lancaster Avenue in West Philadelphia in partnership with the People’s Emergency Center. The resulting Neighborhood Time Exchange provides artists with a storefront studio space, a monthly stipend, and basic tools and supplies. In exchange for time in the storefront, the artists contribute volunteer time to work with residents on their ideas to enhance the neighborhood.

In 2016, Mural Arts created the Tacony LAB with the support of Councilman Bobby Henon. The LAB offers art classes for adults and youth, as well as other, free arts-focused events. From 2016–2018, an artist-in-residence program anchored professional artists in the Tacony community. It provided them with studio space at the LAB. During their residencies, the artists worked with the community to develop public art in Tacony and used the studio to create their own artwork.

Also in 2016, Mural Arts invited artists and social service organizations to apply to open another storefront under the umbrella of the Porch Light program. Porch Light sought to use the blended arts and social services model of Southeast by Southeast that had been so successful. New Kensington CDC applied with a team including Impact Services and Prevention Point. It had Kensington Avenue in mind for its storefront location. The team’s goal was to uplift the resilience of a community struggling with drug addiction, crime, and housing insecurity. In the summer of 2017, just after the storefront opened and early in the experimentation phase around programming, the City completed a cleanup of a large nearby encampment of people experiencing homelessness and opioid use disorder. The Kensington Storefront saw an uptick in the number of people in this situation coming by the space. It shifted its programming and services, accordingly. Since, the Kensington Storefront has developed into a safe space oasis for wellness-focused artmaking and reflection. It strives to welcome all

who come through the door and recognize their dignity. The storefront also connects individuals to organizations that provide services and referrals that they might not otherwise encounter. It serves as a hub for area organizations to collaborate.

In the Oxford Circle’s Castor Avenue commercial corridor, Mural Arts started the Northeast Passage in August 2017. Also under the aegis of Porch Light, the Northeast Passage caters to the one in four Oxford Circle residents who are first-generation. Weekly classes at the hub offer life skills and tools to navigate health systems. They happen in tandem with creative programming. Northeast Passage is housed within The Exchange, a thrift store and community center run by the Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Association.

Each of these hubs is a little different, combining different services and partnerships.

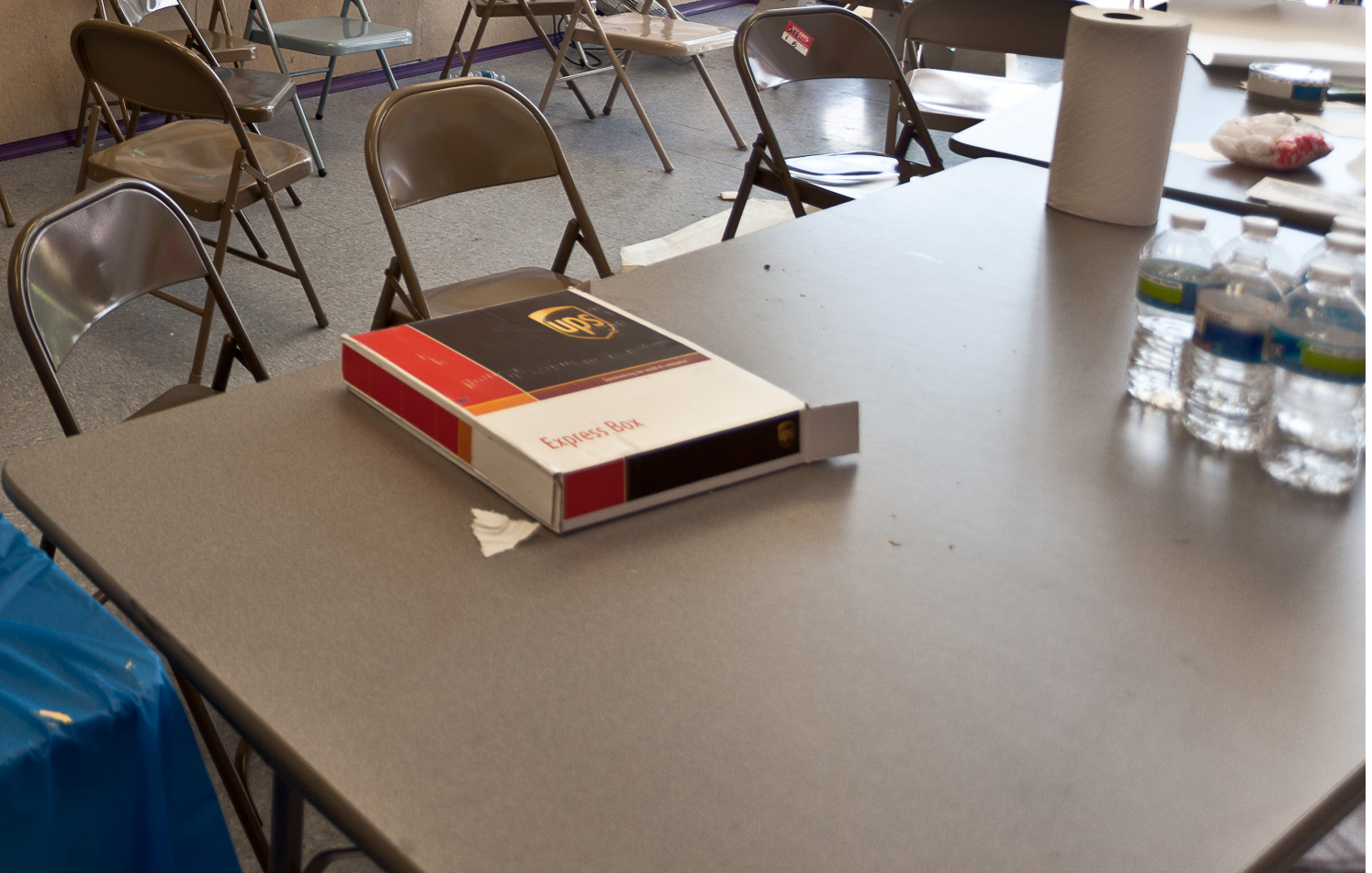
The Neighborhood Time Exchange and the Tacony LAB use a model that centers artist residencies and participatory artmaking. They use the hubspace as a platform for participatory artmaking and access to the arts, rather than social service delivery.

The Northeast Passage is a hybrid of the Porch Light storefront model and the Porch Light provider-site model. It combines creative programming with service delivery in a storefront, albeit an existing thrift store and community center run by a partner organization.

Southeast by Southeast and the Kensington Storefront are the prototypical Porch Light storefront model. For these, Mural Arts is primarily responsible for staffing and programming the space along with service delivery partners. In this multi-disciplinary services approach, neither art-making nor social service delivery are dominant. The community understands these two storefronts as mixed spaces where you can get access to services, but you can also make art and build relationships. In their most successful moments, these storefronts are neither the partner organization’s space nor Mural Arts’ space, but spaces that become inhabited and owned by the community.



Setting up the first Southeast x Southeast storefront site. June 2012.  
Photo by Steve Weinik.



# Building Blocks of a Successful Storefront

Mural Arts has found that the budget to run a multi-disciplinary space like these ranges from \$100,000 to \$200,000 a year. This budget range includes the cost of renting the space, a salary for one program manager, costs for one art project per year, and ongoing programming costs. This figure does not include many of the resources that partner organizations bring that are essential to the model. As the storefront model has evolved over time, so have the elements of the model that are essential to make a storefront work for everyone involved.

**A core community to engage with:** A key feature of the storefront model is how each space evolves to respond to the assets, interests, and needs of each community. At Southeast by Southeast, initially the primary community was refugees from Burma and Bhutan, who were being resettled in Southeast Philadelphia. Now new immigrant communities are coming through the youth programming in particular. The space now serves refugees from the Congo, Pakistani women, Vietnamese grandmothers, and Spanish speakers along with the core Karen, Chin, and Nepali-speaking communities.

At the Kensington Storefront, the core constituents are folks who are in active substance abuse who are living transiently and are housing insecure. The storefront also appeals to people who live in the neighborhood who struggle with other types of behavioral health issues. These folks may be home during the day and looking for a place to engage. Other people who come by might be in recovery and have a strong service mentality. They come to the space to volunteer and give back to the community.

**Engaging arts and culture programming:** The arts programming in each storefront includes a range of participatory artmaking/learning. At Southeast by Southeast, most of the arts and culture programming began as project-based engagement. The activities led up to the first series of murals by Shira Walinsky and Miriam Singer: print-making workshops and larger community

gatherings to celebrate Karen, Chin, and Nepali food and culture. Over time, programming included photo and interviewing techniques that wove together celebrating cultural identity, sharing experiences and needs, and literacy with adults and youth. Another anchor of the cultural programming became a Friday textiles class that teaches sewing and weaving. Periodically, the storefront has hosted craft sales for the women from this class to sell the items they made. Mural Arts' Arts Education program also holds classes in the storefront twice a week.

Textile programming also anchors The Kensington Storefront, with its Tuesday Tea and Textiles program led by artists Kathryn Pannepacker and Lisa Kelley. This program started with weaving and has branched into other activities, like making bracelets, paper crafts, and coloring. Wednesdays are devoted for workshops led by artists-in-residence, which have focused on painting, wheatpaste art, embroidery and printing on fabric, and mural-making. Other regular workshops focus on writing and self-expression, particularly for survivors of trauma and violence. Led by artists and volunteers, these offerings have also branched into multi-media. A monthly open mic event has developed a significant following. Newer programming includes a weekly community music hangout led by music therapists. A local journalism project, Kensington Voice, holds an "Expression Session" on Fridays.

**Innovative public and community artworks:** The storefront model began as a "home base" for community engagement that feeds into the production of murals. These spaces continue to ground artwork production by professional artists, which Mural Arts helps to realize on a project-by-project basis. These artworks cultivate a sense of belonging for participants and help build a distinct identity for each space. Sometimes these projects are structured as part of a formal artist residency. Mural Arts accepts proposals from artists to do 10-15 weeks of classes at the Kensington Storefront that results in some kind of public artwork. For instance, The Renegade Company director Mike Durkin conducted a series of theater workshops that resulted in "(Kensington) Streetplay," performed while walking in the neighborhood. Other times, artists who are involved in long-term programming see the space and their ongoing engagement with the community as an opportunity to incubate ideas for projects and artworks. Artist

Shira Walinsky has informally been in residence at Southeast by Southeast since the very first series of murals. She has since produced 3 books that grew out of photo and literacy projects, a bus wrap project, the “Free Speech” installation as part of Monument Lab, and a series of films. Some funding for mural projects comes from DBHIDS for a Porch Light “signature” mural every year that focuses on a behavioral health topic. The ongoing programming in each space helps Mural Arts steward the relationships built through each project. It enhances the impact of what would otherwise be one-off projects. (A full list of artworks produced by Mural Arts in connection with each space can be found at the end of this spotlight.)

**Responsive social service delivery and referrals:**

Each storefront responds to the very different needs for social services in its community. In many cases, the impact of these social services is enhanced by integrating them with artmaking. On a weekly basis, Southeast by Southeast offers ESL and citizenship classes, access to interpretation, and outreach for a range of other services. English language learning classes integrate art and visual imagery, and the learning continues through participatory artmaking, giving students opportunities to practice their English. Since the early phase of Southeast by Southeast, the team particularly focused on case management and mental health services referrals for the refugee community. Employing case management aides and other cultural navigators who know the community well has anchored this approach. Currently, Nationalities Service Center offers a family strengthening case management program in the storefront. The Friday textile program was originally a health education and sewing class aimed at vocational placements and with some small business support. For a short time, it evolved into a micro-enterprise program for craft businesses. When a core community leader lost the space she was using for an afterschool homework help program, the storefront began hosting the program. Now homework help is part of the regular programming.

At the Kensington Storefront, social service delivery has adapted to a more transient and housing insecure population in need of recovery services. As a result, the team has layered services into arts programming and developed arts programming that offers opportunities for mindfulness and wellness. Some of the most

important services the center provides are snacks, a hot cup of tea or coffee, cold water during heat waves, and a place to be inside during weather extremes. The storefront has adopted a harm reduction approach to opioid use disorder, so staff and many volunteers are trained to use Narcan to save someone in the middle of an overdose. DBHIDS also staffs the storefront with a rotation of Certified Recovery Specialists and Certified Peer Specialists who are ready to talk with anyone and to make warm handoffs with Prevention Point for individuals who are interested in recovery services. During arts programming, nurses might be available to do health checks, light wound care, or administer vaccines. Other social service programs might stand on their own, such as free legal services through Homeless Outreach or criminal record expungement clinics.

**Opening the space for community uses:** Both storefronts have let other community leaders and organizations hold meetings and events in the space. Mural Arts has a policy of giving trusted community leaders keys to each storefront, so that they can run their programs on their own. For instance, community leaders at Southeast by Southeast became concerned about how the young people were losing the ability to speak to their grandparents, so they have hosted Karen language acquisition and maintenance programs in the storefront. Kensington More Beautiful and Somerset Neighbors for Better Living hold meetings at the Kensington Storefront. A journalism class connected to the Kensington Voice project holds a monthly class meeting in the space. These kinds of activities bolster a sense of community ownership over the storefront spaces. They also “give back” to volunteers and community leaders who contribute to other programs.

**The right storefront space in the right location (without which there would be no storefront model!):**

For both Southeast by Southeast and the Kensington Storefront, having a storefront space in the neighborhood where the community you are trying to serve lives and spends most of their time has been absolutely crucial. Most of these communities would not travel for programming and services, because of barriers related to the cost of transportation, language, and social isolation. The features of the physical space matter too. Storefront spaces might not be as ideal for some activities, but the visibility that the big glass front windows provide (revealing who

and what is inside) outweighs the downsides. Both storefronts also have enough space so that you can have multiple things happening at once, such as a meeting and a program, or a program and one-on-one consultations with a nurse. Each storefront also has a small office space with a door, which is crucial for private conversations and for securing personal valuables during programming. The current Southeast by Southeast storefront has a fenced backyard area, which is indispensable for kids' programming. Each storefront has used arts and culture to decorate and brand the storefront by painting the grates that are down when the storefront is closed and by installing artwork on the walls. At the Kensington Storefront, the walls are covered with artwork in all kinds of media made by program participants. This "customization" further instills a sense of pride and community ownership over the spaces.

**Consistent staffing by Mural Arts, artists, and volunteers:** Both storefronts now have full-time Mural Arts program managers trained as social workers. They manage the programming and logistics of the spaces. In the early phase of Southeast by Southeast, partner Lutheran Children Family and Services provided Melissa Fogg's time as a program manager and allocated a full-time case manager to support the refugee community members. When DBHIDS took the reins, funding for Melissa Fogg's position and some of the community case aids was transferred to Mural Arts. Pamela Draper, also trained as a social worker and with a background in music therapy, joined the Kensington Storefront as program manager in 2019. Each storefront has also benefitted from artists who have made long-term investments in each space. They have offered weekly programs and developed multiple projects while "in residence." Most importantly, though, each storefront could not operate without a whole team of committed community members who run ESL and citizenship classes, workshops for survivors, and have become the lifeblood supporting the programs run by Mural Arts.

**Complementary partnerships that leverage networks, promote learning, and generate new ideas:** Having level footing between social service and art-making partners from the beginning, creates the possibility to learn from each other and bring complementary ideas and resources to the project. When Mural Arts and Lutheran Children and Family Services opened the first Southeast by Southeast storefront, they developed the programming for the space together. Similarly, New Kensington CDC, Impact Services, and Prevention Point have been involved in the Kensington Storefront since its inception. DBHIDS has been involved as a funder since the initial partnership between Mural Arts and Lutheran Children and Family Services for Southeast by Southeast. As the Porch Light partnership between DBHIDS and Mural Arts has deepened, the DBHIDS has stepped up their support for social service delivery by providing the Certified Recovery and Peer Specialists for the Kensington Storefront and making connections to other service providers. All of the core partnerships leverage their networks to bring in additional partners for programming inside and outside the storefront spaces.

**Additional resources and supports unique to each storefront:** The Kensington Storefront would not work without snacks, water, and pots and pots of coffee and tea. Also crucial is having Narcan and the training on how to use it for staff and volunteers who want to perform that service. Southeast by Southeast would cease to function without the interpreters who facilitate connections with community members with limited English language skills. Both spaces actually share a need for a trauma-informed approach that creates a sense of safety and care, though each community is dealing with different kinds of trauma. This means that staff and volunteers also may need extra support for self-care to continue to serve these unique communities.





Community Paint Day at Southeast x Southeast, Tiger on 7th Street mural by Shira Walinsky completed 2014. Photo by Steve Weinik.

# Secrets to a Successful Storefront

How you put the building blocks together makes all the difference in whether a multi-disciplinary storefront project “works.” Mural Arts and its collaborators have learned several critical lessons along the way...

**Celebrate and invest in community assets and cultural traditions:** The programs and projects in each space begin from a place of wellness and resilience. They seek to enhance the existing strengths of the community. On top of celebrating Karen, Chin, and Nepali culture in every project, Southeast by Southeast has brought in community artists to lead weaving demonstrations and poetry workshops. All of the programming in the Kensington Storefront celebrates the ability for creativity and self-expression in every person that walks through the door.

**Be open to experimentation. Listen for and adapt to community needs:** All team members need a willingness to try new things and to change, if the usual formulas don’t work. For instance, at the Kensington Storefront, teams needed to be willing to try and fail until they found what programming worked for a housing insecure community in active addiction. Mural Arts’ storefronts also effectively responded to larger shifts outside the storefront that affect their communities. Southeast by Southeast has had to adapt as U.S. refugee resettlement programs all but cease, and the refugee community’s needs change as they become more settled in the U.S. Maintaining flexibility as programming solidifies is challenging, but if programming organically develops, it will evolve and take on a life of its own.

**Create a welcoming environment that is open to different ways of engaging:** Each storefront has worked really hard to create a sense of welcome, safety, and belonging for participants. Southeast by Southeast began by trying to create something that was the opposite of the refugees’ experiences of fleeing, a sense of settling in and ownership. We cannot overstate the importance of welcoming, without judgment, everyone who comes into

the Kensington Storefront in whatever state they might be in that day. The people who come in are free to choose how much they want to engage in an art-making activity. Some people come and just sit quietly with their coffee, soaking up the peacefulness of being inside in the presence of others. Both storefronts also strive to be open to new volunteers and community members to see how they might become involved.

**Commit long enough to develop momentum and see the project through:** The primary benefit of a storefront space is the ability to develop long-term relationships within a community. This takes time. You probably won’t even be able to quantify the outcomes of really getting to know the neighborhood, learning all the stakeholders, and the ins and outs of community assets and needs. Based on the experience of these two storefronts, it takes at least a year to develop responsive programming and a sense of community ownership. Identifying a consistent, stable source of funding is crucial to making a long-term commitment. Having DBHIDS as a funder and a partner from the beginning has enabled the storefronts to flourish. Knowing at the outset, however, that Southeast by Southeast had at least two years of funding would have relieved a lot of stress in the early days.

**Define clear goals to rally team members around a common purpose:** A multi-disciplinary team that brings together different expertise and perspectives needs to organize around a common purpose in order to function well. Staff, artists, and volunteers also appreciate a sense of belonging and mutual support in each storefront. In addition to the particular communities they serve, everyone shares a belief that art can make a difference and help address community challenges. Being responsive and flexible is important, but it can be a challenge if you feel pressured to meet so many urgent and critical needs. Setting specific goals keeps you from trying to do everything and getting overwhelmed.

**Recognize the social responsibility of long-term work with artists and community members:**

Developing relationships in neighborhoods with histories of trauma required consistency and long-term investments. Participants begin to place trust in you and expect you to be there at the same time every week. When you become a resource that community members depend on and develop a sense of ownership over, you must ask yourself: what will you do with that trust? who takes on the work if and when you can't? When Lutheran Children and Family Services closed,

Mural Arts and DBHIDS were there to steward the relationships they had all built together. Long-term work can also lead to burnout for staff and artists. There is a danger that artists who have made long-term investments in these programs feel pressure to do too much and will be exploited creatively, emotionally, and financially. Artists should be paid fairly for their time and staff should help artists set reasonable boundaries. The Kensington Storefront learned that the artists that provide programs need to have periodic breaks to recharge and take care of themselves.



The second Southeast x Southeast storefront  
July 2019.  
Photo by Steve Weinik.



Resilience by Parris Stancell.  
Completed 2018.  
Photo by Steve Weinik.



# Opportunities for Further Development

The storefront model is still evolving. All of the team members are still learning. They see areas where they would like to go deeper and adapt to ongoing challenges. This section describes some avenues where Mural Arts might further develop the model.

**Deepen the trauma-informed approach and supports for staff and artists:** This is necessary both to develop appropriate programming and to develop supportive self-care practices for those working in the space. Mural Arts and DBHIDS are developing a Trauma 101 workshop to offer to staff, artists, and volunteers who work in both storefront spaces. Mural Arts might also consider enlisting a behavioral or mental health partner to support staff, artists, and volunteers.

**Increase health and social service delivery partners and resources:** The model works best when the team includes a health or social service delivery partner. With many agencies shifting away from resettlement services, Southeast by Southeast would benefit from a formal clinical health partner to support a renewed focus on mental health referrals and services. Although the Kensington Storefront has already benefitted from multiple service partners, having an RN or someone who can do recovery intake on site full-time would be a huge help.

**Increase support for artists who are involved long-term:** Artists fuel the storefront spaces by providing regular programming and shorter-term workshops related to project development. Some artists engage for longer periods of time either by developing core programs or over multiple projects and have developed a body of work with these particular communities. Mural Arts might consider what kinds of labor artists are doing that does not fit into the category of a program or a project engagement and may be uncompensated. A long-term artist-in-residence or staff artist role might better support artists and honor their commitment and investment.

**Keep up a balance of engaging programs and artwork:** It's important to keep a sense of excitement in the storefront generated by a mix of programs and larger artwork projects. Finding regular funding for program needs, beyond the program manager and the space itself, can be a challenge. Southeast by Southeast had short-term funding to develop textile micro-enterprises, but enthusiasm dwindled when the funding ran out. While other forms of participatory artmaking are also crucial, larger scale artworks like murals and books most effectively generate community pride and sense of accomplishment. These artworks serve as a touchstone for all the engagement that feed into them.

**Develop project management competencies for artmaking beyond murals:** The Porch Light storefronts have produced books, films, and weaving projects. Through these projects and many others, Mural Arts has been developing its repertoire beyond mural-making into different public art media and social practice approaches. There are opportunities for Mural Arts to continue to develop the process of supporting projects that don't end up as paint on a wall. This could include increased documentation of the art that only exists within the process of engagement or as a residency. Some strategies for process documentation include keeping artist journals or conducting periodic interviews with key team members or participants. Mural Arts has opportunities to continue reflecting on what "social practice" means for Mural Arts and how it is merging addressing community issues with the process of artmaking.

**Increase engagement with community members outside the core community:** Both storefront teams have been very effective in reaching the core community segments and have begun to have success in engaging other community members. They want others to see that the programming the spaces offer are also for them, but it's a challenge to make someone feel welcome when they are the only person like themselves there.

Southeast by Southeast has opportunities to deepen engagement with refugees and immigrants beyond the Karen, Chin, and Nepali ethnic groups. The Kensington Storefront can further extend its trauma-informed approach among neighborhood residents.

**Continue to coordinate with larger strategies in reaching these communities:** Each storefront has seen incredible success by combining and coordinating outreach to socially isolated segments of the community. Philadelphia, like many cities around the U.S. and around the world,

is experiencing rapid development and population shifts that threaten displacement for historically marginalized communities. Mural Arts and its collaborators should continue to be responsive to larger trends in the storefront neighborhoods. They should look for opportunities to shape and connect with larger equitable development initiatives. To stay responsive, collaborators must ensure that “on the ground” perspectives filter up to, and combine with, larger policy-level initiatives. Though challenging, staying true to comprehensive, asset-based wellness approaches will amplify the voices of community members.



Make Sew Weave at Southeast by Southeast, December 5, 2015. Photo Michael Reali.



Community Work Day at Southeast x Southeast. From the Mountain to the City, mural by Shira Walinsky completed 2013. Photo by Steve Weinik.



# Ongoing Potential for Profound Impacts

Multi-disciplinary storefront spaces have the potential to function as extremely powerful “third places.” Like libraries and other cultural centers, the storefronts offer alternative spaces for social connection that are neither home nor work. They are places to gather when otherwise you wouldn’t leave your home except to go to the welfare office or take your kids to school. They are a place to go where you don’t have to spend money. It’s different than being outside in the hustle of the street. These third places welcome and cater to segments of the community who have been socially isolated. They have incredible power to reduce stigma and connect these community members to the larger community. In terms of social service delivery, the storefronts offer neutral ground for service providers to connect with people who would not come to a health center or other agency. The potential increase in community members who engage in services through this conduit is profound.

At Southeast by Southeast, the Karen, Chin, and Nepali refugee communities have grown in confidence and their sense of home in this community. Earlier on, the community case managers told staff that the women were afraid to take out the trash because of violence in the neighborhood. Now these same women come to meetings to hear about and contribute to community efforts. There have also been significant gains in English language ability and literacy for individual project participants. A youth participant needed an interpreter to participate in the first book project based on interviews and stories, *Our Future Starts Here*. Three years later, he was conducting the interviews on his

own for the second book, *We Made It and Will Make It: Untold Stories of Immigrant and Refugee Youth*. The stories of the community’s ongoing development could fill many books.

The Kensington Storefront provides social connection and a sense of belonging that can literally be a lifeline by itself. It’s a place where people come to regain a little bit of a sense of humanity. The community knows it’s a place where you can get help, if you need it. There you can also make art. People will learn your name and make eye contact with you. A former participant came back to the space after getting into recovery and finding a place to live. He told one of the artists that she had saved his life by accepting him and smiling at him. The two-year anniversary party celebrated a sense of connection and belonging, the people who have been coming, the relationships they have built, and the way they have grown and changed. Many of the most profound impacts also happen in the midst of participatory artmaking itself. Someone who is weaving relaxes a little and is more comfortable talking with others. Recovery specialists note that artmaking helps them connect with people who come in and learn about their needs, which someone might not be able to express otherwise. Someone who is weaving is also not thinking about using. Drawing a picture might provide an opportunity for a moment of clarity that helps someone make the choice to go into recovery. In these ways, art itself is harm reduction and has many of the same benefits as meditation or mindfulness practices.



Language Lab mural by Shira Walinsky.  
Completed 2015.  
Photo by Steve Walnik.



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## Southeast by Southwest (SExSE) Project Credits

Mural Arts Department  
**Porch Light**

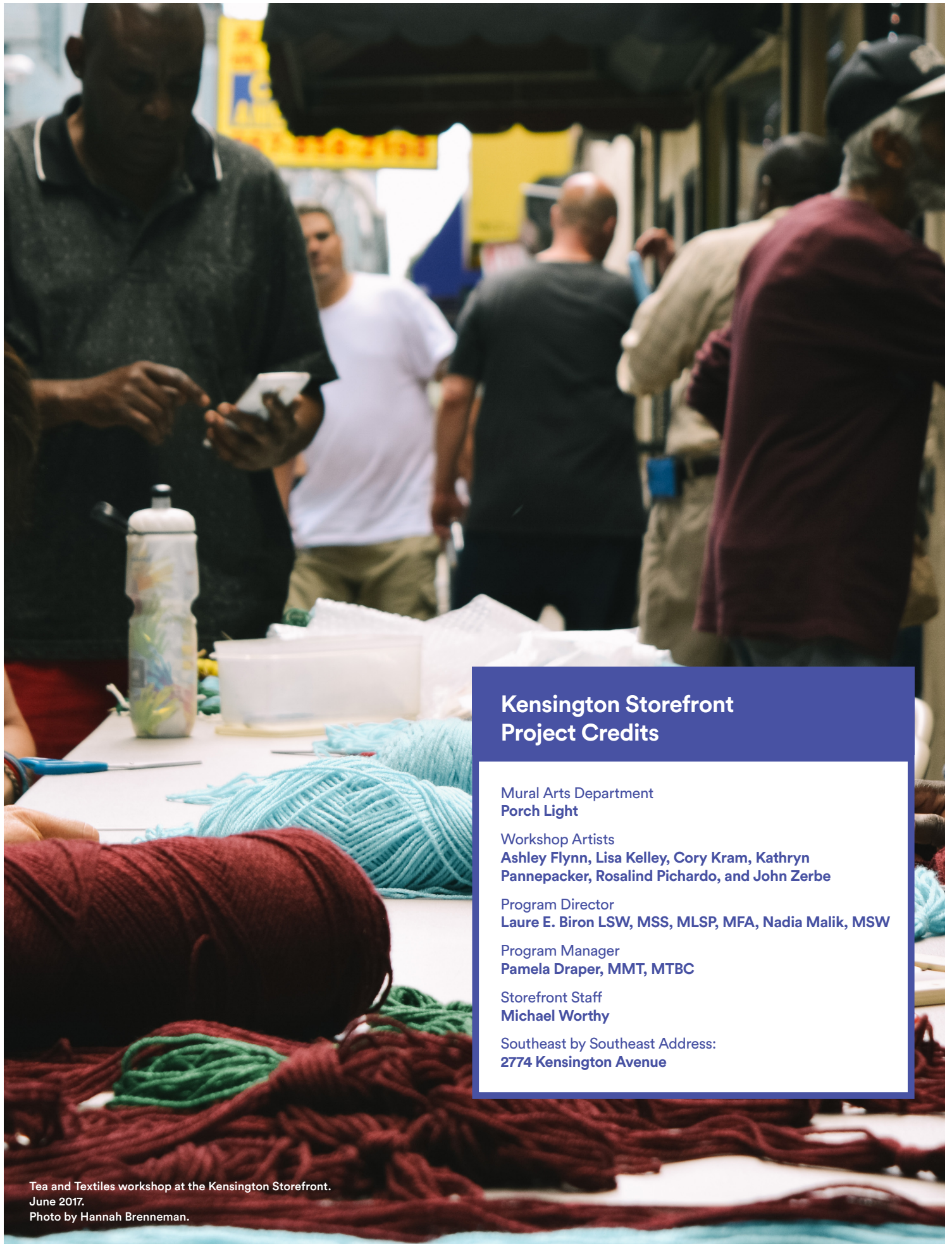
Lead Artist and Co-Founder  
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Mural Arts Department  
**Porch Light**

Workshop Artists  
**Ashley Flynn, Lisa Kelley, Cory Kram, Kathryn Pannepacker, Rosalind Pichardo, and John Zerbe**

Program Director  
**Laure E. Biron LSW, MSS, MLSP, MFA, Nadia Malik, MSW**

Program Manager  
**Pamela Draper, MMT, MTBC**

Storefront Staff  
**Michael Worthy**

Southeast by Southeast Address:  
**2774 Kensington Avenue**

Tea and Textiles workshop at the Kensington Storefront.  
June 2017.  
Photo by Hannah Brenneman.

# Southeast by Southeast Timeline

## Phase 1 - Development

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**2012** — Mural Arts participates in a photovoice community participatory research project eliciting refugee mental health experiences and needs with the Philadelphia Refugee Mental Health Collaborative (Lutheran Children and Family Services and Jefferson University Hospital's Department of Family and Community Medicine).

— Storefront space opens at 1927 S. 7th Street. Shira Walinsky and Miriam Singer conduct printmaking workshops in the storefront in the process of development of a series of murals around the storefront, creating a pathway between the storefront and the community garden nearby.

**2013** — MURALS

“From the Mountains to the City,” Shira Walinsky (2013), 7th and Emily

“Wheatpastes,” Miriam Singer (2013)  
“Paste 1” at 7th and Dudley  
“Paste 2” at 7th and McKean  
“Paste 3” in garden at 8th and Emily

“Farming Up the Mountain in Philadelphia,” Shira Walinsky (2013) in garden at 8th and Emily

“Tiger mural”, Shira Walinsky (2013), 7th and Dudley

— Additional smaller murals painted with the community, including map of Bhutan and Karen flag murals with teens (2012-2013)

# Southeast by Southeast Timeline

## Phase 2

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**2013** — Textile programming begins, including workshops by artists such as Jessica Curtaz

**2014** — Ongoing programming in the storefront with women and youth using photography and interview techniques to support literacy. Results in three books of photography and stories.

- . Shira Walinsky works on mural design and painting with Sunrise ESL after school program at Southwark High School (2014)
- . Our Future Starts Here (book), Shira Walinsky with youth participants (2014)
- . We Made It and Will Make It: Untold Stories of Immigrant and Refugee Youth (book), Shira Walinsky with youth participants (2017)
- . From Here to There: Picture Stories of Refugee Women's Lives (book), Shira Walinsky (2018)

— Murals featuring Karen textile designs on the storefront and neighboring businesses, Shira Walinsky

— “Namaste” (mural), Shira Walinsky. Marks the first Nepalese grocery store in the community, depicts Paro Taktsang monastery in Bhutan.

**2015** — “Language Lab” (mural), Shira Walinsky, 7th and Moore Streets. The mural contains illustrations of iconic images such as a palm tree, dragon, lotus and the 47 bus. The illustrations are translated into different languages spoken in South Philadelphia including, Karen, Chin, Vietnamese, Pashto, Urdu, Khmer, Lao, Chinese, Spanish, Italian.

# Southeast by Southeast Timeline

## Phase 3

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- 2016** — Second storefront opens at 2016 S. 8th Street. Melissa Fogg transitions to Mural Arts staff.
- Artist residencies in the storefront: Shira Walinsky, Laura Deutch, Catzie Vilayphonh  
Catzie Vilayphonh organizes the first Southeast Asian Refugee Brigade to march in the 2017 Mummer’s Parade
- 2017** — “47 Stories” (bus wrap and audio stories), Shira Walinsky and Laura Deutch
- “Free Speech at Marconi Plaza,” as part of Monument Lab (installation), Shira Walinsky and collaborators.
- 2018** — “Making Home Movies” (6 films), Marie Alarcon, Muthi Reed, Shira Walinsky. Students and teachers from 6 English Language Learning classes worked closely with storytellers and project organizers to produce six experiential documentaries.



# Kensington Storefront Timeline

## Phase 1 - Development

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**2017** — Kensington Storefront opens and artist residencies begin.

- Tuesday Tea & Textiles (residency), Kathryn Pannepacker and Lisa Kelley. Weaving workshops that developed into a regular fixture of the storefront programming
- Binding Things (residency), Jessica Curtaz. Crochet workshops and installations on nearby fences
- Wheatpaste workshops (residency), Julia Owens. Wheatpaste workshops and installations
- “Somerset Hub” (sculpture) - Michael Morgan, Brickworks. Wet clay brick workshop and sculpture installed at Frankford Avenue and Tusculum Street

**2018** — “Resilience” (mural), Parris Stancell, 2012 East Allegheny Avenue. Developed through workshops throughout the first year of the Kensington Storefront.

- Painting Your Emotions (residency), James Alvin

# Kensington Storefront Timeline

## Phase 2

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### 2018

- Open Mic and Poetry Nights (residency), Ursula Rucker
- The Road Home (residency), Swoon and collaborators. A 6-week artist residency in the storefront connected to Swoon's Porch Light Signature Project mural.
  - . Programming in the storefront included beauty shop, toy-making, writing, drawing, and movie hangout activities. The team held coordinated programming at Prevention Point.
  - . The team curated a day-long conference on trauma and recovery at International House featuring Dr. Gabor Maté.
  - . Everyday Healing (zine), Jessica Radovich, focusing on mindfulness.
  - . "Healing Begins Through Connection" (mural), Swoon, 2913 Kensington Avenue.
- "(Kensington) Streetplay" (residency), Mike Durkin (The Renegade Company). A series of workshops to create a site-responsive community-based play in which the participants are the creators and performers of the work.  
Performed by participants as a walking streetplay as part of the 2018 Fringe Arts Festival
- Binding Things (second residency), Jessica Curtaz. Crochet workshops.
- Community Quilt (residency), Rebecca Schultz

### 2019

- Patches and Prayer Flags (residency), Jacqueline Jugan
- Mural-making (residency), Leon Rainbow. Mural-making workshops and Phoenix mural (in production).



Voices of Survivors workshop at the Kensington storefront, February 22, 2019.  
Photo by Steve Weinik. www



47 Stories © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Shira Walinsky, Septa Route 47.  
Photo by Shira Walinsky.