ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR, FINE ART

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Shooting a large-scale public art installation

with **Sabine Hornig**

Sabine Hornig, an artist from Berlin, was invited by Public Art Fund to participate in a competition to create an installation for LaGuardia Airport's new Terminal B – and she was awarded one of four large projects. We sat down with Sabine to hear the story of how her art evolved to include photography, what inspired her in creating the installation at LaGuardia, and how she achieved the final result.

Hi Sabine, thanks so much for taking the time to speak with us about your incredible art. To start, we would love to hear how your art evolved to include photography.

My background is actually in sculpting. At a certain point, I began incorporating large transparent photographs into my works. I first realized this at the Malmö Museum of Art in 1995. These works were quite large-scale and thus required high resolution images, as I had to enlarge them to the scale of the work. I find that the transparent images I have been working with become almost three dimensional in the space; it's almost sculptural to me. So I don't feel as if I have moved away from sculpture, I have just added an entirely new dimension and medium to my sculptural work.

And is that how you came up with the concept for the LaGuardia Visa installation? What inspired you?

I enjoy seeing how things become interactive in space, through light, as well as the intermixing of the image and the reality which is visible through it. This reality seen through the image becomes another layer to the work, or an image in itself. The work becomes a constantly changing experience, which you interact with through the eye and while moving your body through the space.

The work is a large photograph depicting the New York City skyline as you would see it in the distance from the very window on which it is installed at LaGuardia Airport. I flipped this skyline, photographed in golden daylight, upside down like a reflection into the space. The golden skyline intersects with a second, nighttime, cityscape in darker colors.
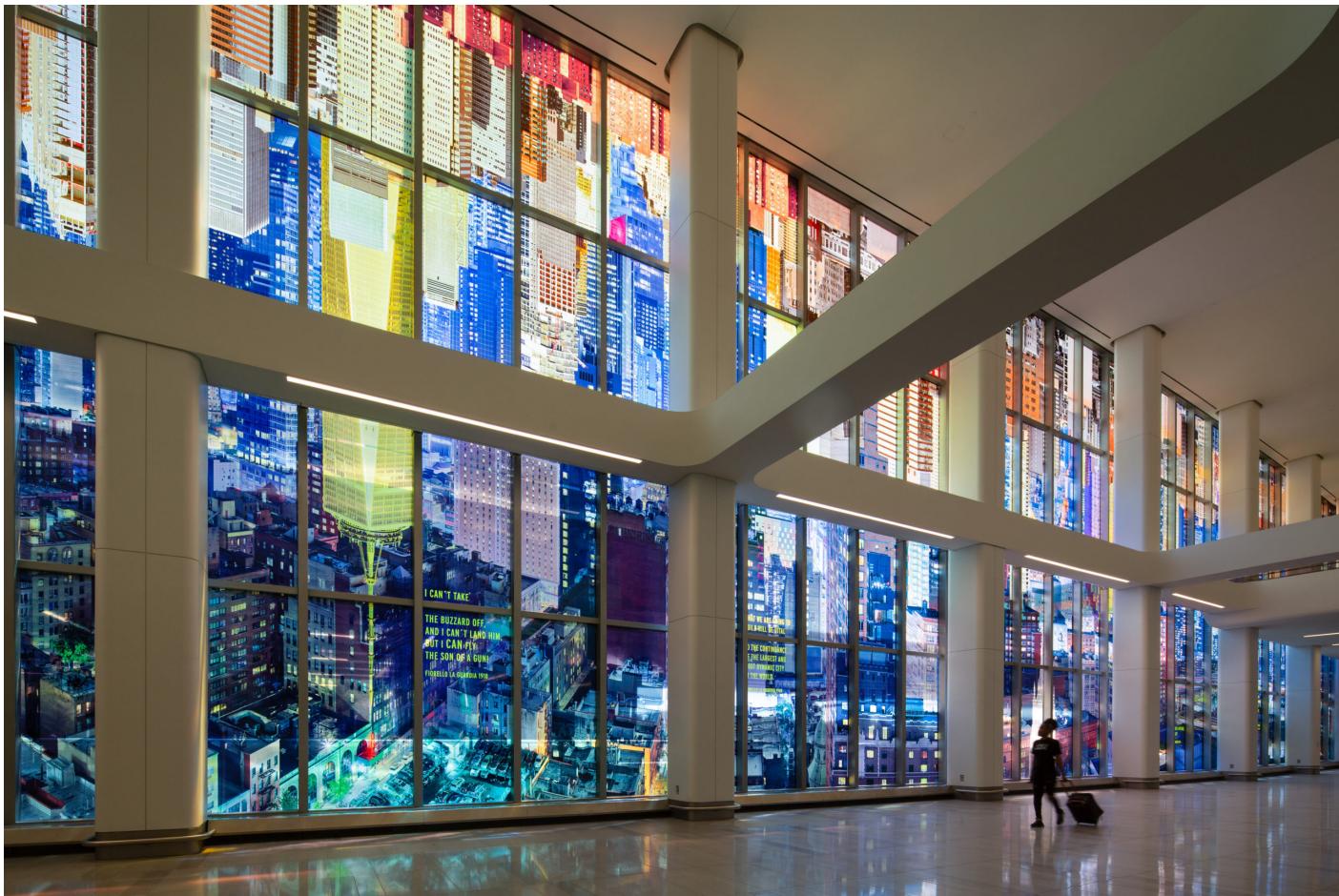
Sabine Hornig, La Guardia Vistas, 2020,
La Guardia Airport, commissioned by LaGuardia Gateway Partners and Public Art Fund, New York,
@Sabine Hornig and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Photo by Nicholas Knight

The work brings together the New York skyline and textual elements. The title, La Guardia Vistas, refers to this literal view, or vista, and then also to the views and ideas of the founder of the airport, former New York City Mayor, Fiorello La Guardia. This idea came to me through a friend who grew up in Queens. His father was a big admirer of the famous mayor. When I learnt that the airport already has this rich history, I began researching Fiorello La Guardia and became more and more interested in what he'd said. He was quite a progressive politician, with a lot to say about democratic ways of creating a city. I found what he said still applies to the city today. Using his thoughts together with the images added a richness to the work in a contemporary, yet timeless, way. I show La Guardia's views together with a view of the city he had a big part in building.
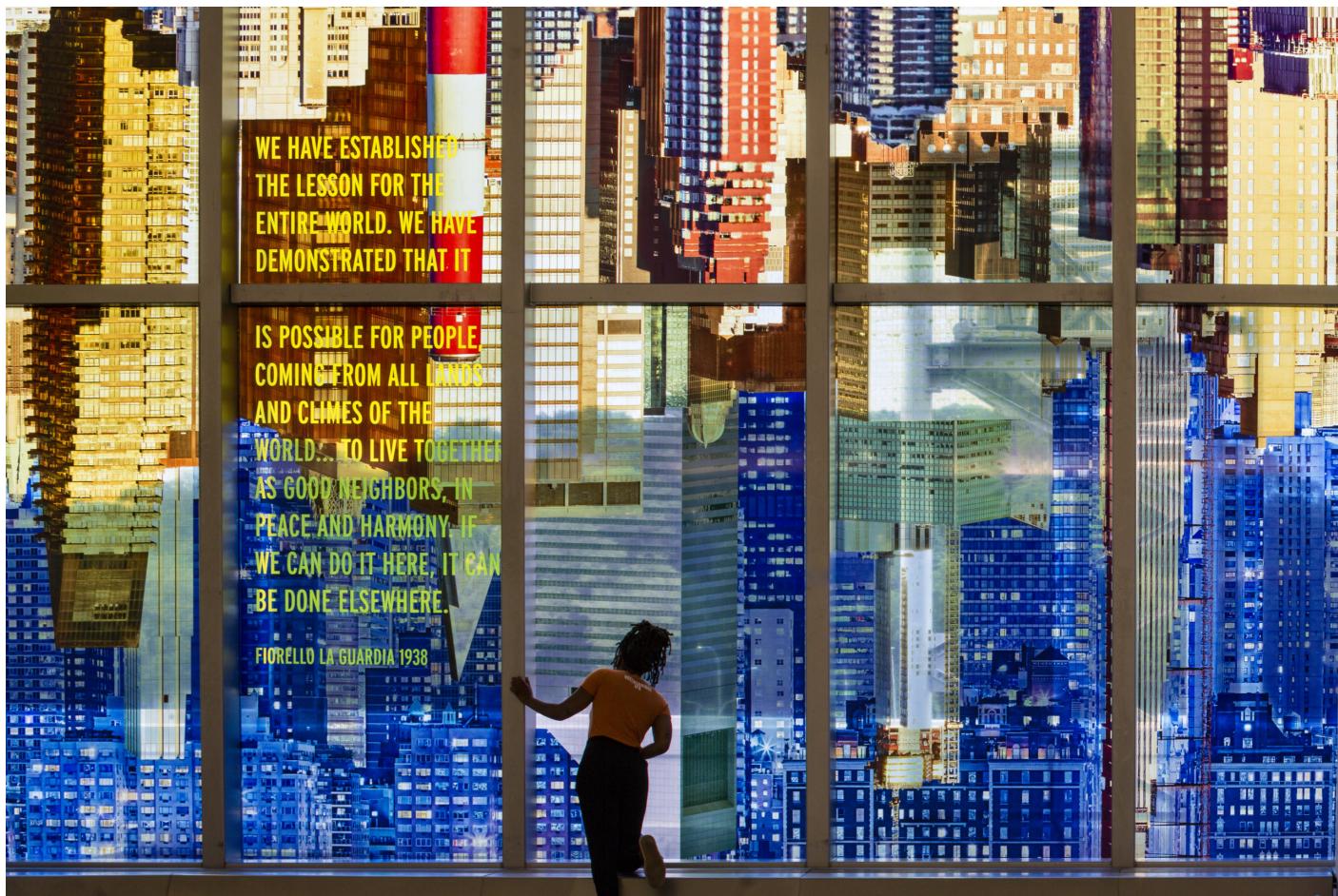
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Can we talk a bit about your process in creating the installation?

The scale of the work meant that it had to be photographed in many sections and from different angles. I worked together with the photographer Mark Pokorny from Sydney, who has also worked with me on a previous large project in Sydney, to photograph in New York. Together, we developed a method to keep all the photographs at their highest resolution, with the possibility of reducing them later.

For the upside down, golden skyline, we kept the angle of the view from the airport, photographing the individual sections of buildings closer up, mostly from the waterfront, and higher up on the rooftops of some buildings. These photographs then had to be assembled back together. We photographed the night skyline from different perspectives within the city and assembled these together to form one image. The entire work was photographed from 50-55 locations. At each suitable perspective, we set up the camera and took 25-50 single photographs of the view, to ensure that we had the size and resolution of the final work. These individual images were then stitched together into a panoramic image, which became a part of the final image.

We spent two and a half weeks in New York photographing the city, starting on September 23, 2019. The sheer scale of this project meant that we chose to shoot the entire project on the Phase One XF IQ4 150MP Camera System. We used two different lenses (the 150MM and 240MM Blue Ring). Additionally, we had a tripod and used panorama products from RRS. Some of the images were shot using a gigapan, and for others we used a panoramic head. The final photograph is made up of 1104 individual photographs which we took in this time.

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I roughly assembled the image in New York to ensure that I had everything. The rest of the work was then done by me and my team back in Berlin, where we spent the next five months, until February 2020, cutting and assembling the images, and completing the work. This was a very tight schedule for a work of this scale.

The artwork was produced in Düsseldorf, Germany, and consists of transparent, self-adhesive film with a latex printed coating, which was then applied to the interior face of the glass curtain wall.

What was helpful about using the IQ4 150MP for this project?

The resolution of the camera was incredibly helpful in this project. The combination of the 150MP and the lenses used meant we could take really detailed photographs of buildings from fewer locations than I would have done with other equipment. Although the images were taken from a distance, the details of windows and other elements remain clear. This greatly contributed to the quality of the work. From outside, you have an overview of the whole work, the brightly colored interlocking skylines seen at night when you approach the airport. At the same time, the close-up details seen from inside the building remain in great detail.

In addition to the resolution, the higher ISO on this camera version, in comparison to the IQ3, was of great use for our nighttime shots. We made use of the external shutter release, the Electronic Shutter for movement reduction, as well as the Vibration Analysis and Vibration Delay to ensure that we were capturing the sharpest images possible. The touchscreen and USB-C connection helped in smoothing our workflow.

And to wrap up, what is the biggest challenge you faced in creating this work?

There are a number of challenges with a work of this scale.

For one, photography applied in public space, as opposed to an art space, presents some obstacles or distracting elements. There will always be some of these elements present in a public space, such as signage or advertisement. Since the work is a transparent photograph, these elements strongly interact with the work in this space.

Then, of course, the architectural size was a challenge. This is the largest work I have ever done, at about 13 meters high (42 ft) and 80 meters (268 ft) long. The scale was a new experience for me. It brings us to the edge of what is possible with the current technology in photography.

Sabine Hornig, La Guardia Vistas, 2020,
La Guardia Airport, commissioned by LaGuardia Gateway Partners and Public Art Fund, New York,
@Sabine Hornig and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Photo by Nicholas Knight

Last but not least is the appearance of the scale of the work vs the close-up details. Large images of architecture are usually only seen from the distance. It's hard to imagine the true appearance in space when you can also go right up to the image; what will you see?

I have not yet seen this work in person – only a test install that we did in February, shortly before lockdown. I supervised the installation from afar with the help of Public Art Fund and am eager to return to New York to see it myself.

Thank you so much, and we look forward to seeing your art next time we fly through LaGuardia!

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La Guardia Airport, commissioned by LaGuardia Gateway Partners and Public Art Fund, New York,
@Sabine Hornig and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Photo by Nicholas Knight

You can view more of Sabine's work at:

www.sabine-hornig.de

www.publicartfund.org/exhibitions/view/terminalb/

www.tanyabonakdargallery.com/artists/38-sabine-hornig/

Learn more about the IQ4 150MP here:

www.phaseone.com/Photography/IQ-Digital-Backs/IQ4

Or request a sales call to discuss your specific needs here:

www.phaseone.com/DemoSignup/Request-A-Demo

Credits for the featured image at the top of this story:

Sabine Hornig, La Guardia Vistas, 2020,

La Guardia Airport, commissioned by LaGuardia Gateway Partners and Public Art Fund, New York, @Sabine Hornig and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Photo by Nicholas Knight

about Sabine Hornig

Berlin-based artist Sabine Hornig is known for her sculptures, spatial interventions and transparent photographs that re-imagine architectural spaces and ubiquitous urban forms to allow for new interpretations of conventional histories, memory, and the lived environment. Her works re-contextualize familiar spaces, revealing new perspectives in exploring the tension between the three-dimensional space and architectural surface. The existing glass facades become both planes and portals, enabling us to simultaneously experience various perceptions. Aside from the recent large scale intervention at LaGuardia Airport, Hornig has realized installations and exhibitions worldwide such as Shadows, Sydney International Towers, Barangaroo, Sydney; Double Transparency, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Durchs Fenster/ Through the Window, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; O Segundo Espaçio / The Second Room, CCB Lisbon; Projects 78, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Sabine Hornig is currently working on a commission for a new federal parliament building in Berlin.