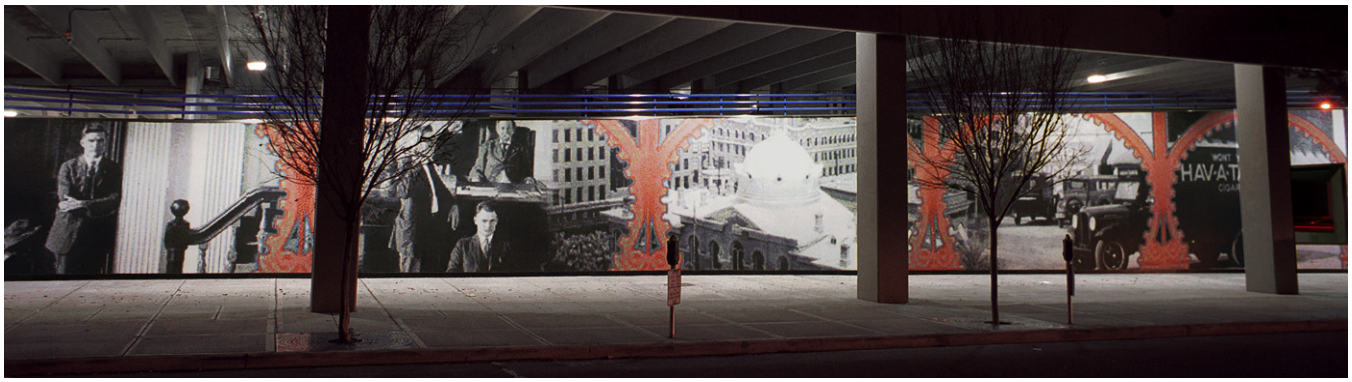
TampaPublicArt

Project Title: Florida/Kennedy Municipal Parking Garage
Artist: Mike Mandel (American, born 1950)
Year Completed: 2000
Materials: ceramic tile mosaic mural
Commissioning Agency: City of Tampa, Public Art Program
Architect/Design Professional: Sylla, Inc., Tampa, Florida and Rigall Landscape Design
Location: Located on Kennedy Blvd. between Florida Avenue, and Franklin Street



Project Description

The facility is a four level municipal parking garage constructed from precast concrete. A covered walkway or loggia runs along Kennedy Blvd., where high pedestrian and vehicular traffic is relatively constant, especially during business hours. This site also holds historic significance, having once been the site of the Hillsborough County Courthouse.

Artist Concept

"In my work I am interested in engaging history, culture, myth, geography, politics, and neighborhoods, and translating these intertwined stories into a voice accessible to the community, in attempting to realize this goal I tap into the power of documentary. Photographs, artifacts, and people's own words can be translated into a public space to dramatically engage an audience with instances of history and human experience. I feel permanent public works, like architecture, become and integral part of our living environment and prefer to think of mosaic walls as part of buildings, rather than an add-on, for tile is an architectural medium.

Parking at the Courthouse connects together a variety of historical images central to the theme (or function) and site (or location) of the Florida/Kennedy Parking Garage. The garage replaced a surface parking lot. Many years prior to that, the site was the location of the former Hillsborough County Courthouse, a magnificent structure built in 1892 by J.A. Wood, the architect of the Tampa Bay Hotel, now better known as the University of Tampa. For this reason I chose to frame the imagery of the mural with multiple arches that I photographed at the University while doing project research.

These same arabesque style arches appear throughout the Courthouse in the windows and entrances. As the arches are framing devices for the rest of the mural, the square columns of the building that frame the walkway of the loggia area serve as framing devices as well, when one looks at the artwork from across the street. The central imagery of the mural is the Courthouse, one image emphasizes the former great dome, and another image represents the inside of the court room during the Key Club trial of 1927, documenting social history of the time (possibly a case about liquor or gambling violations during Prohibition). On either side of the Courthouse images reference the automobile in different eras, a connection to the function of the building as a parking garage. On the left, two police officers stand at attention next to their late 50's patrol car, again, an homage to the fact that the primary clients of this structure will be the police. And on the right, there is an arrangement of cars from the 1920s parked at the Eli Witt Cigar Company, acknowledging one of the major themes in Tampa's history. "Hav-A-Tampa" not only beckons to advertise the sale of cigars in a bygone era, but suggests that by connecting with the imagery within the mural, one can accept and invitation to re-experience the city. These images are experienced architecturally, they are not framed on the wall, they have become the wall."-Mike Mandel

The mission of the City of Tampa, Public Art Program is to promote the involvement of artists in projects throughout the city that enhance the physical environment and celebrate Tampa's unique character and identity.

City of Tampa Department of Arts and Cultural Affairs • Public Art Program
306 East Jackson Street, 8N • Tampa, Florida 33602 • (813) 274-8531 • Fax: (813) 274-8127