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Monday, October 19, 2026

National Women's Suffrage Mural Series Expands to New York City and Portland

Public art series brings overlooked local suffrage history into view as voting rights and the teaching of diverse history remain contested

NEW YORK CITY — A national public art series highlighting the women who fought to expand voting rights is growing from Chicago to New York City and Portland, Oregon, this month, bringing local suffrage history to public walls city by city.

Monumenta's National Suffrage Mural Series will dedicate a new mural in New York City on October 23, followed by Portland in early December. The expansion builds on three large-scale murals installed in Chicago in 2021 and 2023 and continues a model in which each city's mural is shaped by its own history and local figures, engaging regional artists and community partners. Monumenta intends to bring the mural series to ten cities across the country. Photos of the existing murals and details on the women depicted in them can be found in the media kit here.

The series arrives at a consequential moment for the histories it tells. Less than 5% of public art features women or women-centered historical events, according to project research, while voting access continues to be the subject of significant legislative and legal fights across the country. At the same time, restrictions on how schools and museums discuss race, racism and gender have been imposed across the country.

Against that backdrop—and as Americans prepare to vote in the 2026 midterm elections—the mural series uses free, accessible public art to keep women's, voting rights and civil rights history visible outside traditional museums and classrooms.

"The fight for women's right to vote was a national movement, but it wasn't one story," said Michelle Duster, Co-Director of the National Suffrage Mural Series and public historian whose great-grandmother was suffragist Ida B. Wells. "The strategies and victories were unique in each community and region and involved generations of women whose names many people have never learned. By telling these stories in public spaces, we can make that history visible and accessible to people in their everyday lives."

Duster and Neysa Page-Lieberman, Artistic Director of Monumenta, developed the series around the idea that national history can be understood through local stories. Rather than reproduce a single artwork around the country, each mural highlights women connected to the city where it is located, while incorporating contemporary artists, communities and perspectives.

New York City

On Friday, October 23 at 1:30 p.m., Monumenta will dedicate a new mural by multimedia artist

Sam Kirk at the Henrietta Szold School, P.S. 134, 293 E. Broadway. Kirk led an all-women team of eight diverse artists to install the massive mural, connecting women's visibility in public art with the opportunity to create it. Debuting just ahead of the midterm elections, the mural portrays 16 women connected to New York City's suffrage history, including figures whose contributions are less widely known today. The site was selected for its location in an area of the city paramount to women's rights activism, to highlight the importance of diverse history in school curriculum, and for the site's accessibility to the surrounding community.

Portland

The series will continue in Portland, Oregon with a mural by artist Addie Boswell at SmartPark, 730 SW 10th Avenue. The mural is currently being installed and will be dedicated in early December.

Developed in partnership with the Portland Street Art Alliance and supported by the Women's Foundation of Oregon, the mural will feature 10 local leaders and bring Portland's own suffrage history to the community and into the national spotlight.

"Public art commemorates the stories a society chooses to remember," said Page-Lieberman. "These murals honor women who expanded American democracy while giving local artists and communities in each city an opportunity to interpret what that history means today. The scale of these walls matters too – the suffrage movement endured for over seven decades with thousands of participants; the stories deserve monumental platforms."

The producers of the National Suffrage Mural Series also seek to broaden public understanding of the movement beyond the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Women fought for suffrage for more than seven decades, and racial discrimination, citizenship laws and other barriers limited access to the ballot for many women after the amendment's passage. Women of color gained full voting rights much later through a patchwork of civil rights laws: Native American women in 1924; Asian American women in 1952; Black women in 1965; and Hispanic women in 1975.

Through its growing collection of murals, Monumenta is creating a national history told locally—one city, one wall and one set of stories at a time.

Additional information about Monumenta and the National Suffrage Mural Series–including photos and details on the women depicted in the murals–is available at monumentaart.org or in the media kit here.

About Monumenta

Monumenta is a public art initiative that engages artists and community partners to monumentalize our collective actions and stories. We envision, develop, advocate, connect and present lesser-known stories as monuments in public space. Projects are designed and centered in feminist practice, reflective of the world's diversity, and working towards justice and equality.

MEDIA CONTACT:
Malik Joseph, Rudd Resources
mjoseph@ruddresources.net

Neysa Page-Lieberman, Monumeta
neysa@monumentaart.org

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