



Indianapolis Airport Authority

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# Airport art delayed by Hurricane Katrina to be installed by New Orleans artist this week

*Newest addition to permanent collection will be dedicated with Feb. 25 event that also celebrates opening of two new temporary exhibits*

INDIANAPOLIS—A large mural will be installed at Indianapolis International Airport this week, nearly 16 months behind schedule because of the devastating hurricane that swept the Gulf Coast in 2005.

New Orleans native and artist Martin Akinlana's home and studio was destroyed, forcing the artist and his family of eight to take refuge in Washington, DC until repairs were made and it was safe to return.

"We had identified Marcus as a finalist in the airport's permanent art program, but before he could submit his design proposal, the hurricane struck and he lost everything, including of his research and notes for the project. The family and studio were displaced for over a year before being rebuilt. Marcus had other commissions in the pipeline that had to be completed before ours," explained Alpha Blackburn, vice president of the IND Foundation, the airport authority's nonprofit organization that oversees its arts and cultural initiatives.

## ROADS TO DELIBERATE DREAMS: INDIANA'S GENIUSES, TINKERERS, AND SPEEDSTERS

Titled "Roads to Deliberate Dreams: Indiana's Geniuses, Tinkerers, and Speedsters," Blackburn describes Akinlana's three-dimensional piece as a narrative mural that reflects aspects of the state's transportation history, including aviation.

The work, which is comprised of two 7 x 30 foot panels, will be installed on the overhead bulkhead above the baggage claim offices lining the rear wall of the lower level of the terminal flanking either side of the main escalator.

"Marcus' work tells a visual story, featuring astronauts, race cars, and other aspects of Indiana's heritage. Historical figures like Lewis & Clark, Octave Chanute, Major Taylor, and Amelia Earhart are included. The selection committee liked the fact that his mix of characters included Native Americans, African-Americans, Irish immigrants, and women to illustrate

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diverse, often marginalized, groups of people who influenced the development and advancement of transportation in Indiana,” Blackburn said. “Black History Month seemed an appropriate time for us to dedicate the mural.”

## TWO NEW TEMPORARY EXHIBITS AT IND

Coinciding with the permanent installation of Akinlana’s work are two temporary exhibits that will both open February 23.

1. In the two large display cases in the Ticketing Hall near Civic Plaza will be an exhibit titled “The History of Transportation in Indiana,” presented by the Indiana Historical Society. The two-part exhibit will run through Mid-June in one of the cases and through the end of November in the other.
2. In Concourse B, an exhibit recognizing “Indiana’s Tuskegee Airmen of Distinction” will also be installed February 23 and will run through mid-June. Blackburn said the exhibit was curated specifically to open during Black History month as a tribute to these groundbreaking aviation pioneers.

## FEBRUARY 25 RECEPTION AT 5:30 P.M.

Both Akinlana’s contribution to the airport authority’s permanent art collection and the two temporary exhibits will be recognized with an event from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, February 25.

- Indiana’s last surviving Tuskegee Airman, Dr. Quentin P. Smith of Gary, Indiana, will be a special guest at the reception. Smith was a flight instructor at Tuskegee Army Air Field who later trained as a bomber pilot.
- The son of Lt. Charles B. Hall, one of the Tuskegee Airmen responsible for the first aerial victory by a black pilot when he downed an enemy plane in 1943, will also be in attendance at the reception. The elder Hall died in 1971 with a military record that included a total of 108 missions and three enemy planes downed. Both the elder Hall and his son are from Brazil, Indiana.

Admission to the event is complimentary. Refreshments will be available at a cash bar. Business casual attire is recommended.

The reception will be held in Baggage Claim, just past the Visitor Information Center kiosks along the back wall closest to the main escalators.

Attendees can also purchase copies of the foundation’s book “IND: The Art of It All.” Proceeds from the 128-page book (which features outstanding photography, information about the airport’s art and architecture, and a selection of recipes from airport restaurateurs) go to support the airport’s art program. The cost is \$29.95 + tax.

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## INTERVIEWS & PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

**Reporters and photographers interested in interviews or photo opportunities with artist Marcus Akinlana are invited to a media availability Tuesday, February 23 from 3 to 4 p.m. in Baggage Claim.**

Please e-RSVP to [ssullivan@indianapolisairport](mailto:ssullivan@indianapolisairport) if you are interested in interviews and photo opportunities with Akinlana and/or any of the Tuskegee Airmen representatives who will be attending the Thursday, February 25 reception.

For a complete description of his work, including a biographical sketch of the artist, please see the separate attachment. This document which includes the artist's preliminary concept and sketches submitted several years ago as part of the original public art selection process for the Midfield Project.

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