



**warmups**

Faves, raves, and fun stuff for our community to appreciate

## MURALS THAT DANCE

**Photographer JJ Tiziou's ongoing project celebrates Philadelphians lighting up public spaces.** | BY LAURA CIROLIA

"People tell me they are not photogenic, but I know different," says photographer Jacques-Jean ("JJ") Tiziou. Using dance to express his belief that everyone is photogenic, 33-year-old Tiziou is responsible for the public art endeavor How Philly Moves, which includes the second-largest mural in the world. The awe-inspiring mural, covering 85,000 square feet, graces the top decks of the Philadelphia International Airport parking garage, a structure about six stories tall. Twenty-six people swaying and spinning are illuminated and unified in a field of black, transforming the space they cover and the perception of the city they represent.

Tiziou points out the literal meaning of the term "photogenic"—something that generates light. "We all have potential to bring light into the world around us, and into our own lives. I'm not saying we're fireflies. It's a bigger spiritual thing," he says laughing.

The project, which began in 2008, is continuing due to an outpouring of public engagement and support. Any Philadelphian who self-identifies as someone who loves to dance is invited by Tiziou to be photographed. "Any body. Any age. Any style," says the photographer, who came to appreciate dance through his involvement in the performing arts community and while photographing weddings and other celebrations.

It works like this: one weekend each year, over 60 participants are brought together for a community photo session. They are invited to dance in ten-minute intervals, in a small intimate space. Upon arrival people stretch, practice, introduce themselves to others, and if it's okay with the person on stage at the time, watch the dancing. Dancers can bring any music they choose, or a drummer, or move in

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## The Body's Business

By Debbie Rosas

### Sounding as a Sacred Act

**W**hen you come to a Nia class, you'll notice that music isn't the only sound floating through the room. Students yell "hiya," "huh," "yes," and "no" as they kick, punch, block, and cha-cha-cha. Sounding (as we refer to it in Nia) is fun and expressive, but it's also a beautifully sacred act that's used to blend the body and breath.

Too many of us keep our bodies separate from our minds, either consciously or unconsciously. We ignore messages our bodies send us and force ourselves to sit in front of computer screens for hours and hours. We neglect to find an alignment of our life-force energy (breath) and physical beings.

When we dance and make sounds, we stimulate vibrations in the body. We stop thinking and start feeling. We also sense ourselves as more than dancing bodies—as spirits embodied in flesh. This is part of what makes Nia such a holistic practice; every part of you is engaged as you tune in to your innermost self: your body, mind, emotions, and spirit.

Trusting your voice and getting to know your tone and vocal resonance is a way to relax into your personal power. It is a way to enhance the dance of life, both in stillness and in action. So next time you step into a movement practice or meditation, use your voice to activate the flow and circulation of energy. Only then will you tap into your authentic self and find harmony from the inside out.

#### GETTING STARTED

**LISTEN** to a piece of music several times while lying down in a restful position. Choose something that emotionally moves you.

**BEGIN** to hum, grunt, make other sounds, or sing words that you sense as aligning with certain tones in the music.

**MERGE** and blend your sounding with simple movements that are free-form in nature.

**PAY ATTENTION** to sound details. Exhale with a conscious intent and awareness. This will help you maintain a soft belly, which is key to sounding.

Learn more at [www.NiaNow.com/Education](http://www.NiaNow.com/Education)



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silence. Costumes, hoops, ribbons—while none of it is necessary, all of it is welcome.

"Anyone can come and dance however they want to," says Tiziou. "I am dancing with them in order to capture the moment rather than watching them or directing them in any way." Tiziou adds that his most challenging task is to look each person in the eyes and make them feel safe. He does this by giving up preconceived notions about what the image will be like. "I cultivate knowing where the camera wants to be and let myself be moved by the dancer. The real life of the images comes from the fact that they are not pretending to dance. They are really dancing. It is truly an improvised dance—a collaboration between them, me, and the camera."

The mural came into being through funding from the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, and the project evolved from there. Additional features include a month-long projection installation on the façade of the Kimmel Center commissioned for the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts and an accompanying permanent exhibit in the airport's baggage claim area. Enthusiasm for Tiziou's efforts enabled him to raise additional funds to continue the project through crowd funding, using the Internet platform Kickstarter.

"The real happening is how the shoot comes together," says Tiziou. "Being there and seeing all the people who come to dance, crossing paths in a way they wouldn't in their everyday life, and being celebrated all in the same way." During each shoot, he has noticed that there is a sliver of time where someone lights up and he is completely in sync with them for a split second. "I let myself be open for that," says Tiziou. "One part of me is dealing with all the technical stuff, and the other half of me is interested in making this person's experience the most important thing in my life."

More than 400 people have taken part so far. Participant Mia Rotondo, whose kitchen was her usual dance floor, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to dance on stage. "Today may have been the most liberating four minutes of my life," she said. "I felt safe; I felt celebrated and beautiful."

Information about the ongoing project can be found at [www.HowPhillyMoves.org](http://www.HowPhillyMoves.org)

