

# A Valley & Beyond

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**a lot of potential!**

You may have read the preview I did for the inaugural 3rd Thursday. I, seriously, saw a lot of potential here. The Cigar Factory and Fuse Art Infrastructure prove my thoughts correct and more!

**Honestly, I did not expect** a large turnout. Reasons? The first event at Cigar Factory / Thursday night football with the Eagles playing / location. The Cigar Factory is located at 4th and Tilghman streets. No, it is not a bad section of Allentown. Most people think of Hamilton as the area to go. Well, the event / FUSE Art Infrastructure / Cigar Factory proved me wrong here. Arriving later than planned, the place was alive with people! Yeah, I did have a smile on my face within a few seconds.

The building has a Y-shaped layout. You walk in down a short hall which served as the reception area. Yodi (artist and spoken word performer) greeted everyone and was the DJ. Refreshments were available. Right off, you felt very welcome. From there, take a left or right. To your left, there is a large room with an exhibit. I followed the conversations, hung a left. Thinking I had a good idea of what to expect from the preview also proved me wrong.

**What makes this different** from other galleries / studios? Other than the layout?

The atmosphere is the main appeal. The combination of past and present. Walking around, you see brick walls joined with painted, dividing sections. The wood floors and ceiling with ducts and pipes provide the history. Talking to a few people, they agreed me. You can, literally, feel the history in this building. Yes, it was an actual cigar factory decades ago. This provides an almost perfect "urban" atmosphere. What you would expect a gallery / studios to look like in any center city area.

**Speaking** with some of the artists, they were very happy. Enjoying both the buildings appeal and freedom of creativity.

Like I said, artists of different styles / genres were present. Sculptures and paintings including: Femi J. Johnson, Steven D. Condra and Victoria Snyder. The artists and works take you from realism to different worlds in your imagination.

**Overall.** 3rd Thursday was a success. Not only were artists and people who support local arts present. I heard conversations about not knowing this place existed. Almost everyone in agreement the Cigar Factory and 3rd Thursday will become very big in the Lehigh Valley.

**Congratulations** to FUSE ART Infrastructure / the Cigar Factory / Artists for the planning and pulling it off. The timing of after summer provides you with a better chance to stop by. There are less events happening during the week. Not trying to compete for your time on the weekends is another advantage. Also, for having a great turnout and more interest in 3rd Thursdays and the Cigar Factory. I know everyone worked very hard to make the inaugural 3rd Thursday a huge success! You pulled it off and a lot more. I have a feeling each one will only be bigger and better.

In case you missed it, the Cigar Factory is open days and weekends. You can still stop by and find out if I am right or wrong.

**Cigar Factory:**

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cigar-Factory-Artist-Studios/147851718756538>

**NOW / 3rd Thursday:**

<https://www.facebook.com/events/501212693303258/?ref=2>

**Fuse Art Infrastructure:**

<https://www.facebook.com/FuseArtAllentown?fref=ts>

**Photos:**

<http://avalleyandbeyond.weebly.com/cigar-factory-3rd-thursday-photos.html>

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