COMMUNITY MURAL ART PROGRAM PROPOSAL
City of San Luis Obispo, CA

Collin Tateishi  ✈️  Senior Project, 2011  ✈️  Umut Toker, Faculty Advisor
City and Regional Planning Department  ✈️  College of Architecture and Environmental Design  ✈️  California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
COMMUNITY MURAL ART PROGRAM PROPOSAL
City of San Luis Obispo, CA

Collin Tateishi
Senior Project, 2011

Umut Toker, Faculty Advisor
City and Regional Planning Department
College of Architecture and Environmental Design
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
COVER

Another Times Voice Remembers My Passion's Humanity

40th St. & Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois
Source: Barthelmeh, 1982: 22

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rip Off (Universal Alley)

Mitchell Caton (1970)
15th between Champlain and St. Lawrence, Chicago, Illinois
Source: Cockcroft et al., 1977: 164
# Literature Review

## The Mural

### History and Evolution of Murals

1. The Mexican Mural Movement
2. Murals in the United States
3. International Influences (Nicaragua)

### Case Studies Today

1. Social
2. Political
3. Artistic

## Murals, Street Art, and Graffiti

1. Summary—Murals as Social Art

# Methodology

## Program Objectives

## Research Methods

## Data Analyzed

# Findings

## Community Development Department

## Parks and Recreation Department

## Community Members

## Cal Poly Students v. Local Residents

1. Cal Poly Students
2. Locals

# Community Mural Art Program

## Background

## Guidelines

1. Preliminary Criteria—Eligibility and Funding
2. Preliminary Design Process—Selecting an Artist and a Site
3. Review / Approval Process
4. Development Process
5. Preservation and Restoration

## Summary

## Appendix

# References
Venice on the Half Shell

Rip Cronk (1981)
Venice Pavilion, Venice, CA
Source: Young, 1988: 89
Introduction

Murals have a history rooted in social, political, and cultural change. A form of wall painting that embodies local culture and expression, murals are a form of public art that is “conceived in a given space and rooted in a specific human context” (Cockcroft, Weber, & Cockcroft, 1977: p. xxiv). Unlike a painting displayed within a closed or private facility for visitors to view, murals are displayed in public open spaces and therefore have the ability to communicate social, political, or artistic messages with the everyday people who see it (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Their relevance to the people and communities they represent allows the mural to serve as a device for establishing community identity and solidarity.

Murals can also function as a tool for urban beautification or community and economic development. By providing an alternative to generic façade designs, murals can replace empty wall space with artistic visual images. For this reason,
cities have often incorporated murals into redevelopment and revitalization plans to enhance their urban landscapes. A more interesting cityscape can attract people to the areas where these murals are located. For example, murals located in commercial spaces with opportunities for shopping and dining can attract more people to this area. As a result, these businesses may experience an increase in sales. The social, cultural, economic, and artistic versatility of murals is evident in their usage by both community groups and city planning departments.

Throughout history, muralism in the United States has been influenced by various social, political, economic, and artistic forces. During the 1930s, murals were used by Mexican muralists such as Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozoco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros to portray the social and political struggles of the lower classes that had been overshadowed by prejudices of the upper classes (Barthelmeh, 1982). By the 1940s, government institutions used murals as an employment source (New Deal Works Progress Administration) to ameliorate the social and economic strains of the Great Depression (Berman, 1975). Murals produced under the various Works Progress Administration programs also emphasized the importance of regionalism as a means for establishing local identity and evoking national pride. During the 1960s and 1970s, murals became an outlet for community identity and expression among many disenfranchised minority communities across the country. As a new method for community organizing, activism, and education, muralism adopted the “community-based” approach popularized by the Mexican muralists of the 1930s. Community-based murals are murals that engage local community members in a participatory development process. Within the past several decades, various cities across the
country have adopted signage policies that restrict (and in some instances prohibit) mural development (Los Angeles).

While the City of San Luis Obispo does identify murals as a form of public art (Public Art Manual), it does not have a community mural program to guide the development, preservation, and financing processes of mural production in the city. A community mural program would contribute to the aesthetic quality, cultural expression, and community and economic development in the City of San Luis Obispo. The objective of this senior project is to develop a research-based community mural program for the City of San Luis Obispo. In the process of developing the mural program, first, analytical research of the history and evolution of murals as a form of social art in the United States and abroad was conducted through a literature review. Then, surveys were conducted with community members and city staff from the City’s Community Development Department and Parks and Recreation Department to identify interests, perceptions and possibilities for a community mural program. This document culminates with the proposed Community Mural Art Program for the City of San Luis Obispo.
2.1 The Mural

A mural is a form of wall painting that can express movements of social, political, and artistic change over time. It is a form of public art that is “conceived in a given space and rooted in a specific human context” (Cockcroft, Weber, & Cockcroft, 1977: p. xxiv). This unique form of public art stretches beyond the confines of traditional painting and art standards by focusing on the human experience (Barnett, 1984). Unlike a painting displayed within a closed or private facility for visitors to view, murals are displayed in public open spaces and therefore send a picturesque message for all to see (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Jose Clemente Orozoco, one of the most recognized and influential muralists of the past century, summarized the importance of murals to society and people as
such: “The highest, the most logical, the purest and strongest form of painting is the mural. In this form alone, it is one with other arts, with all the others. It is, too, the most disinterested form, for it cannot be made a matter of private gain; it cannot be hidden away for the benefit of a certain privileged few. It is for the people; it is for ALL” (Berman, 1975: p. 56).

The urban environment is awakened in the presence of culture and human interaction (Lee, 1960). While culture may often be interpreted in an ethnic context, it is important to understand that culture can also represent a collective identity defined by a mixture of ideas, values, perspectives, and experiences. These elements, representative of a community’s identity, are often portrayed in community-based murals (Cockcroft et al., 1977). By connecting the human and the panel (the façade a mural is painted on), murals can tell a visual story of a community’s history (Siqueiros, 1975) and who they hope to be in the future (Cockcroft et al., 1977). This connection between the human and the built environment not only makes murals a social and expressive art form, but it is what differentiates them from traditional forms of public art. By “eliminating the alienation of artists from the mainstream public life” (Barnett, 1984: p. 37), wall paintings provide a context for which artists can communicate the culture, history, hopes, and struggles of their community.

Collectively, the various mural movements throughout history differ from any other contemporary art movement because in the mural movements, art had embodied profound social causes (Barnett, 1984). The mural movements symbolize “the yearning of artists for roots, of working people for means of expression, of communities for control over their own existence” (Barnett, 1984: p. 19).

2.2 History and Evolution of Murals

Murals are a worldwide, multigenerational and historical art form. They were developed from a synthesis of traditional European art forms (Fresco, Cubism) and used to represent the struggles of the Mexican working-class during the country’s Revolutionary War (Siqueiros, 1975). During the first half of the twentieth century, murals became an employment opportunity and served as an expression of regional and national identity (Berman, 1975). During the Civil Rights Movement, American murals took on the Mexican muralist approach towards more community-based works (Cockcroft et al., 1975). Murals also made a significant international impact—and continue to provide social, cultural, and artistic outlets of
expression (such is the case in Northern Ireland). Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros claimed that although murals were embraced by every country as a form of social art, “no other country has [yet to] produce a mural experiment more influential than Mexico’s” (Siqueiros, 1975: p. 7).

2.2.1 The Mexican Mural Movement

The Mexican Mural Movement (1920s-1930s) was a pivotal moment for culture and art in Mexico. The movement began as a student rebellion during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) (Gomez-Malaga, 2006) and used mural art to visually communicate and address social conflicts. It was during this movement that mural art began to separate and distinguish itself from the more traditional painting mediums popularized by European elites (Siqueiros, 1975). Murals during this period presented a new visual perspective that successfully captured the social tensions that had been overshadowed by prejudices of the upper classes (Barthelmeh, 1982).

There were three generations of artists associated with the Mexican Mural Movement. While each generation made their own contributions to the overall movement, none was more influential than the first generation of muralists. For this reason, emphasis will be placed on the works of “Los Tres Grandes”—Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Jose Celemente Orozoco. Collectively, these three artists used their formal education in painting and

Allegory of California (detail)

Diego Rivera (1930)
San Francisco Stock Exchange, San Francisco, California
Source: Hurlburt, 1989: xix
fine arts to transform public art into social reform (Siqueiros, 1975). Their contributions established a framework for which future generations of muralists would build from. The second generation of muralists included artists such as Rufino Tamayo, Julio Castellanos, and Maria Izquierdo. The third generation is associated with the works of Guerrero Gívan, Juan O’Gorman, and Jose Chavez Morado (Siqueiros, 1975).

The murals produced by Los Tres Grandes embodied the social conflict and emancipation of the people. This first generation of Mexican muralists was the first group of artists since the Italian Renaissance to be recognized for their production of monumental mural paintings (Berman, 1975). To ensure that their art would endure for centuries like the works of the great Renaissance painters, the Mexican muralists studied and mastered the Fresco technique commonly used during the Italian Renaissance (Berman, 1975). The resurgence of the Fresco style produced murals that expressed contemporary ideals through bold and strong painting forms (Berman, 1975).

**Diego Rivera**

Diego Rivera is considered to be the most influential muralist of the Mexican Mural Movement. Born in Guanajuato, Guanajuato in 1886, Rivera studied at the San Carlos Academy of Art from 1898 to 1906 (Hurlburt, 1989). During this period, Positivism—"a form of intellectual emancipation and social evolution in education" (Hurlburt, 1989: p. 89)—had become a prominent perspective in Mexico. This socially-focused ideology is evident in the works of Diego Rivera.

![Man at the Crossroads (detail)](image-url)

*Diego Rivera (1934)*

*Rockefeller Center, New York City, New York*

*Source: Hurlburt, 1989: xxii*
of Rivera and his fellow muralists of the time. Between 1907 and 1920, Rivera was introduced to the styles and compositional techniques of Cubism and Fresco while studying in Spain, France, and Italy (Hurlburt, 1989). Rivera returned to Mexico during the mid-1920s and became involved with the Mexican Communist Party and political mural production. His first Mexican murals “fused Cubism with sociopolitical commentary and the monumental architectural space of government buildings” (Hurlburt, 1989: p. 95). It wasn’t until 1930 that Rivera traveled to the United States to paint.

Two of his most recognized murals painted in the United States are *Detroit Industry* (1932) and *Man at the Crossroads* (1933). *Detroit Industry*, located in the Detroit Institute of Arts, managed to “synthesize a mass of individual images and details into a single coherent whole, portraying his view of the ‘struggle of the worker’ within the context of the twentieth century capitalist industrial environment” (Hurlburt, 1989: p. 95). *Man at the Crossroads*, located at the Rockefeller Center in New York, is the single best known mural in the United States—but also the most controversial (Berman, 1975). This mural was initially commissioned and then whitewashed (painted over) by the Rockefeller family. The mural represented the conflicting ideologies of capitalism and socialism (Berman, 1975). It depicted a young worker standing at the crossroads of the future caught between advanced technology, medicine, agriculture and politics.
Rivera’s ability to combine relevant subject matter and issues of society with a strong compositional framework significantly influenced the style, technique, and approach to mural production used by New Deal art programs such as the Federal Art Project (Berman, 1975). Diego Rivera’s murals, driven by social and political messages, created a new form of art that was accessible to everyday people while also aesthetically enhancing the architectural spaces they were located in (Hurlburt, 1989).

David Alfaro Siqueiros

David Alfaro Siqueiros was the most politically driven muralist of Los Tres Grandes. Born in 1896 in Camargo, Chihuahua, Mexico, Siqueiros also attended the San Carlos Academy of Art. In 1911, Siqueiros participated in a student strike against the academy’s traditional teaching styles (Hurlburt, 1989). By 1913 he had left San Carlos and enrolled in Santa Anita—a suburban arts school rooted in creative and spontaneous approaches to public art. Two years later, Siqueiros became second captain to General Manuel M. Dieguez—head of the Western Division of the revolutionary army (Hurlburt, 1989). By 1918, Siqueiros was actively involved with Centro Bohemia—a politically charged arts group whose purpose was to create “a national art rooted in the indigenous Mexican artistic tradition, a monumental public art, and art at the service of the Mexican Revolution” (Hurlburt, 1989: p. 195). When the military phase of the Mexican Revolution ended in 1918, Siqueiros was awarded a study-trip to Europe. Between 1919 and 1922, he traveled to Italy and Paris where he became educated in various forms of contemporary European art (Hurlburt, 1989). After returning to Mexico in the mid-1920s, Siqueiros became involved with local mural development.

Siqueiros’s work in the United States during the early 1930s, although still politically and socially driven, was...
more refined and progressive in style than his work in Mexico. In Los Angeles, he “employed the instruments of North American industrial technology and utilized collective, or team painting” (Hurlburt, 1989: p. 205) to address the contemporary Mexican political tensions of the time. His message, though highly controversial among the city’s conservative body, was most evident in his piece *La América Tropical* (1932) (Hurlburt, 1989). This mural, located on the old Italian Hall in the Olvera Street District—a center for Mexican community activity—criticized Angeleno elites and imperialism (Hernandez, 2010). It portrayed a “Native American peasant with an eagle—symbolizing American imperialism—bearing down from above” (Hernandez, 2010). The mural created so much controversy that it was whitewashed and Siqueiros was eventually deported (Hernandez, 2010). Beginning in 2010, the Getty Conservation Institute has begun the conservation process for recreating this mural.

*Jose Clemente Orozoco*

Jose Clemente Orozoco applied an introverted and complex approach to mural production during the beginnings of the Mexican Mural Movement. Born in 1883 in Zapotlan el Grande, Jalisco, Orozoco also studied at the San Carlos Academy of Art. His early mural works in Mexico during the 1920s portrayed the sociopolitical tensions of the Mexican Revolution regarding class conflict and the masses (Hurlburt, 1989). Prominent in his work are two unique themes: “creator-destroyer” and “man of fire” (Hurlburt, 1989). Both themes center

Prometheus

*Jose Clemente Orozoco (1930)*

*Pomona College, Pomona, California*

*Source: Hurlburt, 1989: xvii*
on the motif of “the sacrificial hero, the role of the masses, the overthrow of corrupt orders, [and] the hope for a new and superior civilization based on the hero’s higher inspiration” (Hurlburt, 1989: p. 56). By 1927, Orozco left Mexico to come to the United States where he further expanded his unique style. Two of his most distinguished U.S. murals are *Prometheus* and *The Epic of American Civilization*. In 1935, Orozco returned to Mexico and produced murals for several government buildings.

Through their murals, Rivera, Siqueiros, and Orozco were able to successfully critique capitalism and its sociopolitical and humanitarian consequences. Collectively, their murals provided the best example of social realism to North American painters. For this reason, the work of the Mexican muralists became the “paradigm of socially conscious wall paintings in the United States” (Berman, 1975: p. 59).

### 2.2.2 Murals in the United States

Similar to Mexico, murals in the United States have a history of social, political, and artistic influences. Installations at the 1893 Chicago World Fair and Boston Public Library first introduced murals into the American public and federal limelight (Berman, 1975). In 1895, the National Society of Mural Painters was established. By the beginning of the twentieth century, murals were gaining popularity among various art patrons and corporate and institutional agencies (Marling, 1982). By the 1920s murals were being used as an attraction or landmark to bring people into the buildings they were painted in. The private, corporate, and federal government sponsorship of mural art in America during this period represents the transitioning of murals from social and community-based art forms prominent in Mexican mural production to a federally directed and more conservative art form.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both society and art in the United States became secularized (Berman, 1975). The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century radically transformed the patronage and consequently the purpose of mural painting (Berman, 1975). By the twentieth century, the main patrons for mural paintings were the government, industries and rich private individuals. The artists they commissioned used many of the techniques and approaches popularized by the Mexican muralists. This new generation of American muralists drew from the contemporary and everyday life experiences
around them instead of the allegorical figures prominent in nineteenth
century paintings (Berman, 1975). In this way, murals evolved into a new
form of art that was accessible and comprehensible to the general public
(Berman, 1975). This relationship with the public played an important role
in the social and economic reform efforts following the Great Depression.
Murals provided social and economic reform by creating a variety of job
opportunities for the entire country. Through community engagement,
they were able to establish a new sense of community and national
identity. Murals produced during the New Deal Era publically recorded an
important moment of American history.

New Deal (Works Progress Administration, 1935-1943)

When the Stock Market crashed in 1929, the United States fell into an
economic depression. In an effort to rejuvenate the nation’s economy,
President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Administration created the New
Deal. The New Deal was a series of economic stimulus programs intended
to provide relief, recovery, and reform for the people and institutions that
were greatly affected by the Great Depression (Berman, 1975). “A direct
impetus to the formation of a mural project under the New Deal came,
of course, from the success of the mural painters in Mexico in the 1920s”
(Berman, 1975: p. 58). For the first time, the federal government included
the arts as a vehicle to communicate economic relief and reform (Berman,
1975).

There were four visual arts programs developed under the President’s
New Deal. The Public Works of Art Project (PWAP, 1933-1934) was the
first government funded New Deal arts program. PWAP was a work-relief program operated under the Treasury Department that intended to provide job opportunities to unemployed artists working in a variety of mediums. In 1934, the Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture (Section, 1934-1943) was established. The Section hosted competitions for mural projects commissions in federal buildings—mainly courthouses and post offices (Berman, 1975).

In 1935, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) developed the Federal Art Project (Project, 1935-1943) to decorate municipal buildings—many of which were in New York City. Although the Section and the Project served similar urban-environmentalist roles, the Federal Art Project operated under different governmental branches. That same year, the Treasury Relief Art Projects (TRAP, 1935-1939) was formed.

TRAP’s creative direction was supervised by the Section and was funded by the Project (Berman, 1975).

The WPA’s Federal Art Project was divided into four divisions: Fine Arts, Practical and Applied Arts, Educational Services, and Technical Supervisory Personnel. Fine Arts was the largest division and employed forty-eight percent of the FAP’s personnel. This division was responsible for the production of murals, sculptures, easel paintings, and graphic arts (Berman, 1975). The Practical and Applied Arts division employed twenty-nine percent of the FAP’s personnel. It created posters, photography, the Index of American Design, arts and crafts, and dioramas and models (Berman, 1975). The Educational
Services division employed seventeen percent of the FAP’s personnel and was responsible for providing federal art galleries, community art centers, art teaching, and research and information (Berman, 1975). Technical Supervisory Personnel was the fourth division and it employed six percent of the FAP’s total staff (Berman, 1975).

The FAP is recognized by authorities as the “most vital and creative program of the four New Deal art projects” (Berman, 1975: p. 3). It produced a total of 2,566 murals (Berman, 1975)—more than 200 of which were done in the general New York City area. The FAP focused on the integration of art into everyday life by encouraging paintings depicting the overall American scene (Berman, 1975). A publication of the WPA/FAP had described the mural division as the following:

“The most picturesque and dramatic of all the work on the Federal Art Project is in the field of mural painting. In this country, mural painting has not until now been a much neglected art, and American artists have had few opportunities in this field. Many of our most talented painters have had their first opportunity to paint a mural under the Federal Art Project. The younger painters in America are attacking the problem of mural painting with the greatest enthusiasm. Public interest has been around, and it seems certain that if this interest and enthusiasm continue, we shall see a strong development of this art in America in the near future. Mural painting develops a direct bridge between the artist and his public. It gives the public a chance to come into daily contact with works of art. This close relationship between the artists and the public is healthy for both. It provides a stimulus for the artists, and works toward an improvement of public taste which will assure the artist a more discriminating public in the future” (Berman, 1975: p. 24).

Artists commissioned to work on the FAP underwent a rigorous selection process which involved submittals of their previous works of art to an approval committee within the FAP’s Fine Arts division. Once selected, these artists had to submit an initial proposal to the Municipal Arts Commission. Collectively, the artist, sponsor, supervisor, and commission would discuss and develop a theme for the mural with regards to the architecture of the municipal building it would be located in. They also took into consideration the history of the community the building was in. Following the final approval, the artist, along with a team of assistant artists, would execute the mural (Berman, 1975).

There were three general types of murals produced under the FAP. Some murals portrayed history related to local institutions while others were designed
for children. Others depicted images of civilization and philosophy. Murals were most commonly located in but not limited to public schools and municipal hospitals. The FAP murals were also placed in a variety of other locations including housing projects, welfare institutions and penitentiaries, borough halls, municipal offices and courthouses, libraries, military institutions, parks and zoos, airports, and a number of portable locations (Berman, 1975). These murals served “a didactic purpose—to teach people about the history of their own area or nation and, through this knowledge, to foster awareness and pride; while other murals served therapeutic purposes” (Berman, 1975: p. 38).

The FAP’s Fine Arts division was responsible for more than just mural production. There were four additional public art branches within the division that created other forms of public art. Over two million silkscreen copies of 35,000 original designs were created by the Poster Section (Berman, 1975). The Easel Section created over 108,000 oil, watercolor, temporary and pastel paintings for state and federal institutions (Berman, 1975). Artists within the Sculpture Section created over 17,000 free-standing and architectural sculptures (Berman, 1975). Printmakers also participated in the FAP—contributing approximately 240,000 prints of 11,285 original designs (Berman, 1975).

Many of the murals produced under the New Deal have had lasting effects—economically, socially and aesthetically—in the communities they were painted in (Berman, 1975). They served as a major employment opportunity for artists of all mediums who had suffered from the Great Depression. “Hundreds of artists launched their careers on the WPA/FAP, and others were able to continue painting without being forced to turn to other means of livelihood” (Berman, 1975: p. 198). Their work sparked a renewed public interest in the arts and established lasting visual representations of regional identity and national expression (Marling, 1982). The WPA/FAP gave rise to great art and artists for decades to follow.

With the onset of World War II, community mural development in the United States plateaued. By July of 1943, Roosevelt’s entire WPA had been liquidated and given an “honorable discharge” to prioritize the national defense budget (Berman, 1975). Over the course of the war, American intellectual and political perceptions of the nation’s society began to criticize popular and mass culture rather than capitalism (Hurlburt, 1989). Individualism became more important than community identity (Hurlburt, 1989). With the absence of social consciousness, the United States lost the most essential
component of community murals—solidarity.

It wasn’t until the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s that the demand for community identity and perseverance would resurface (Cockcroft et al., 1977). For this reason, the importance of the murals that had been created during the Mexican Mural Movement and the New Deal Era were reevaluated (Barthelmeh, 1982). Rather than coming from a top-down manner (government institution to the people), this new generation of American murals came primarily from grassroots and marginalized minority groups living in the inner city (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Like the murals of the Mexican Mural Movement, the wall paintings of the 1960s and 1970s intended to communicate social injustices caused by an established political institution. They demanded the need for civil equality.

Community-based and Urban-environmental Approaches (Civil Rights Era, 1960s-1970s)

During the 1960s, the United States saw murals transition back to their community-based roots. Alan Barnett, author of Community Murals, had described the mural movement of the Civil Rights Era as the following:

“The initial impulse of the new mural movement was collective—to make art about the needs of the community and to strengthen the cooperation of the people. It was natural therefore that most of this art has been done by groups of painters rather than by single artists, although some individual painters have become spokespeople for their neighborhoods and unions” (Barnett, 1984: p. 361).

The Civil Rights Movement (1955-1968) in the United States created a renewed interest in the use of community murals as a social art form among many minority groups located in and around metropolitan city centers (Cockcroft et al., 1977). During WWII, concentrations of African Americans migrated from the South to northern and western city centers like Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles where automotive, steel, and manufacturing jobs were readily available (Cockcroft et al., 1977). They moved into the neighborhoods that the more affluent Anglo communities left for new suburban tracts (Cuff, 2002). As a result of various exclusionary housing policies, bank credit and loaning tactics, and unequal access to jobs and education, these minority groups became isolated in their neglected, urban neighborhoods (Cuff, 2002). The consequences of these social injustices, along with growing corporate disinvestment in city centers, sparked the resurgence of the community mural as a form of social art,
expression, and empowerment (Barnett, 1984). Like the murals of the Mexican Mural Movement, many of the murals of the 1960s and 1970s were community-based and socially and politically driven (Cockcroft et al.,1977).

The Wall of Respect was a mural painted in 1967 by a collective of African American artists from the South Side of Chicago. It represented the beginning of the new community mural art movement in the United States (Cockcroft et al., 1977). The Wall of Respect, “a self-determined effort of community-conscious artists” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 1), provided an opportunity for Black artists in the community to separate themselves from the prejudices of mainstream American society. Located on the exterior of an abandoned building, this mural was composed of a collage of portraits and poems that paid homage to prominent African American leaders in politics, literature, religion, music and sports. The mural included figures such as Elijah Muhammed, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Muhammed Ali and Nat Turner (Cockcroft et al., 1977).

The purpose of the mural was to be a collective act that “used art publicly to express the experience of a people” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 2). Serving as an outlet of cultural heritage, identity, and struggle for Blacks and other ethnic minorities, the Wall of Respect became the driving force for the cooperative, community-based direction of the American Mural Movement (Barthelmeh, 1982). Many of the artists

Wall of Respect

Twenty-one black artists (1967)
43rd and Langley, Chicago, Illinois
Source: Cockcroft et al., 1977: 164
who participated in this socially-conscious effort were members of local community organizations for community empowerment and literary and visual art known as the Organization for Black American Culture (OBAC) and the Forty-third Street Community Organization (Cockcroft, et al., 1977). For years after its creation, the Wall of Respect served as a focal point for community organizing. The mural represented a landmark of community identity and pride in Chicago’s South Side.

The impact that the Wall of Respect had on community organizing and social development inspired marginalized groups throughout the country to develop their own community-based murals. Between 1967 and 1970, several artists from OBAC who had worked on the Wall of Respect collaborated and developed local community murals in various cities such as Detroit, Boston, and Santa Fe (Cockcroft et al., 1977). By 1970, the mural movement had evolved into a multinational force. For the first time, groups of artists were recognized as community muralists (Cockcroft et al., 1977).

Through the 1970s, coinciding with the student movement, Chicano Civil Rights Movement, and new counterculture ideologies, murals began appearing in ethnic enclaves throughout the country. They flourished in cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Berkeley (Barthelmeh, 1982). These murals were oriented in two distinct fashions: 1) community-based murals as a form of social communication and 2) urban-environmental murals as a form of personalized or nonobjective decoration (Cockcroft et al., 1977).

**Community-based Efforts**

The community-based approach addressed social and political issues through a more socially-driven and participatory design process that drew from local artists and community groups (Cockcroft et al., 1977). These murals were typically executed by minorities who could directly represent and identify with the neighborhood that the mural was to be located in (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Community muralist Eda Cockcroft had described the community-based approach as:

"having a rationale of working for the local audience around issues that concern the immediate community, using art as a medium of expression of, for, and with the local audience. [The approach] involved artists with community issues, community organizing, and community response to their artwork" (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 30).
The community-based approach was commonly used in Chicago during this period. Mural art in Chicago was stimulated by a collective effort among socially conscious artists and local communities (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Historically, Chicago has been a center of socially-oriented art, literature and protest (Cockcroft et al., 1977). During the Civil Rights Era, it was home to various nationalistic and activist organizations such as the Black Panther Party, Young Lords, Young Patriots and Students for a Democratic Society (Cockcroft et al., 1977). The contributions of these organizations to local community activism helped bring national notoriety to the murals that were being developed in Chicago during this time (Cockcroft et al., 1977).

The Chicago Mural Group (CMG) was a central figure in
Chicago’s mural scene of the 1970s. To this day, the group remains an active force in the production of Chicago’s murals. Established in 1970, CMG strives to provide “meaningful public art in Chicago’s neighborhoods” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 148). CMG is a cooperative that functions under the Community Arts Foundation—a nonprofit organization that also supports community and theatre groups in Chicago (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Although the organization receives funding from the National Endowment for the Arts Visual Program, it strongly emphasizes the importance of local fundraising and sponsorship because “local sponsorship means local control” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 154). With local control, CMG can function as both the muralist and the organizer. This methodology is reflected in the organizations apprenticeship program. To become a member of CMG, an artist must work with an existing member on at least one mural project before he/she can receive a stipend. The intention of this requirement is to eliminate the non-activist artists from the selection pool (Cockcroft et al., 1977). A restrictive apprenticeship program also gives new artists the opportunity to familiarize themselves with community organizing and mural production specific to Chicago (Cockcroft et al., 1977).
Urban-environmental Efforts

The urban-environmental approach aimed to make public art more accessible to the general public with the greater intention of improving the physical appearance of the built environment (Cockcroft et al., 1977). This approach used a more aesthetically-focused process that allowed for the participation of both independent artists and small collective groups of artists (Cockcroft et al., 1977). It prioritized aesthetic concerns over political and social issues.

The urban-environmentalist direction is often interpreted as “decorative, cosmetic, or environmental” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 36) because it “share[d] much of the philosophical base of urban-renewal planners, architects, and engineers who advocated and practiced efforts to renovate depressed downtown areas” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 37). This type of mural was “normally commissioned and executed by white artists who were not from the community they were working in” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 29)—however, this was
not always the case. Although artists tended to be more resentful of the urban environmental approach, city planners, architects and engineers saw this approach as a tool for urban-renewal and downtown revitalization projects (Cockcroft et al., 1977).

The urban-environmental approach was also prominent in various counterculture pockets during this time period. In San Francisco, urban-environmental murals were concentrated in the Haight Ashbury and Mission Districts (Cockcroft et al., 1977). In Los Angeles, murals were scattered throughout diverse communities like Venice and the African-American enclave at Saint Elmo’s Village in South Central Los Angeles (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Within these communities, the mural represented “a chance for the struggling artist to be seen, as well as to help alter the quality of life in one’s own neighborhood” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 43).

The urban-environmentalist approach to mural production was utilized by City Walls, Inc. (New York, NY).

One of the first local government-sponsored mural projects was executed through City Walls—a non-profit organization in New York (Cockcroft et al.,

**Above**

**Venice on the Half Shell**

Rip Cronk (1981)

Venice Pavilion, Venice, California

Source: Barthelmeh, 1982: 89

**Below**

**Positively 4th Street**

John Wehrle, John Rampley (1976)

Fort Mason, San Francisco, California

Source: Barthelmeh, 1982: 55
1977). Founded in 1967, the organization of urban-environmental artists focused on bringing art to the people by using murals to cover neglected and derelict areas of the city (Cockcroft et al., 1977). For several years, City Walls was “the strongest advocate of nonobjective decorative murals and espoused a policy of supporting only abstract artists” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 41). By serving as the middle-man between artists and the business organizations that provided many of its commissions, City Walls was able to create a series of large scale supergraphic murals throughout New York City (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Because many of the artists were professional painters and designers that had been selected and approved by the organization’s financial sponsors, City Walls lacked the local representation, identity, and community solidarity that was evident in the murals produced by the Chicago Mural Group (Cockcroft et al., 1977).

2.2.3 International Influences (Nicaragua)

The American Mural Movement of the 1960s and 1970s influenced public art advocates around the world (Barthelmeh, 1982). Politically-oriented murals that reflected social unrest and change began appearing in countries experiencing their own civil rights movements. Like in the United States, these murals were concentrated in marginalized and disenfranchised communities (Barthelmeh, 1982). This is evident in the use of murals as social and political outlets in Nicaragua.
Mural art flourished in Nicaragua during the Sandinista Revolution (1979-1990) (Kunzle, 1995). Politically, the revolution represented democracy for Nicaragua (Kunzle, 1995). In the cultural context, it embodied the country’s “deepest roots, its strongest traditions, and its most authentic forms of expression” (Kunzle, 1995: p. xi). Mural art, along with a variety of visual art forms including billboards and graffiti, served as a means for discovering national identity and sovereignty (Kunzle, 1995). By the mid-1980s, the Managua Mural School had been established in the country’s capital. Mural art was concentrated in the Managua city center around the school but also branched into various surrounding suburbs and provinces. During this period, more than three hundred murals were produced by both national and international artists and artist collectives (Kunzle, 1995).

As a result of varying political regimes, murals in Nicaragua were a synthesis of political and cultural themes. Prior to 1979, Nicaragua had been governed by the Sandino and Somoza dictatorships—the latter of which was supported by the United States (Kunzle, 1995). When the Sandinista National Liberation Front (SNLF) came to power in 1979, the people—no longer oppressed—sought to establish a national culture and identity for themselves. Through murals and various other forms of public art, the people celebrated their heritage and emancipation (Kunzle, 1995). In 1990, SNLF was replaced by US-supported rebel groups (Kunzle, 1995). In an attempt to eradicate the national unity and cultural

---

*Good Government (detail)*

Sergio Michilini  
The Monsenor Oscar Amulfo Romero Spiritual Center, Managua, Nicaragua  
Source: Kunzle, 1995: 85
collectivism that had been established during the Sandinista Revolution, the new governing dictatorship launched a mural destruction campaign, closed the Managua Mural School and dismantled many other national arts programs, groups, and councils (Kunzle, 1995). Art and culture in Nicaragua has yet to recover from the destruction (Kunzle, 1995).

Community murals have had lasting influences on cultural groups and government institutions around the world. Although community mural production in the United States peaked during the 1970s, this unique form of public art remains a vital tool for social, political, and artistic expression in marginalized and oppressed communities. The following case studies provide contemporary examples of community mural projects and programs.
2.3 Case Studies Today

Community murals can be used in a variety of ways. During the New Deal Era, murals served social and artistic purposes for unifying regional communities and beautifying federal and local municipal buildings (Berman, 1975). By the early 1970s, murals evolved into a more grassroots, sociopolitical art form (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Today, mural production in the United States is limited and in some cases even prohibited (Los Angeles). Where mural programs do exist, they primarily service social agendas. Political murals can be found in countries that are still developing or experiencing civil injustices. Because artistic murals serve more decorative and ambiguous roles, these murals can still be found in a wide range of cityscapes and urban settings. The following case studies are examples of social, political, and artistic murals.

2.3.1 Social

In the spring of 1996, a local community-based organization in Holyoke, Massachusetts named Nueva Esperanza received funds to create a public mural. Through its afterschool youth program—El Arco Iris (the Rainbow)—the organization assembled a group of twenty Puerto Rican youths, ages nine to seventeen years old to participate in a community mural project. These youths painted a mural on the side of an abandoned warehouse adjacent to a community garden (Gomez, 1996). The mural portrayed the national flags of Puerto Rico and the United States to represent the unity of cultures that the Puerto Rican-American youths identified with. While the inclusion of both flags was meant to show cultural pride, various community members perceived the mural as controversial and anti-American (Gomez, 1996). Local veterans in the community contested the mural and threatened to paint over it. By the end of the debate, the youth group had made the decision to remove the United States flag from the image. Although the mural’s original message of cultural unification was misperceived and alterations to the painting were made, the Puerto Rican community still took pride in their work (Delgado & Barton, 1998). They were able to come together as a collective group and stand up for what they believed in (Delgado & Barton, 1998). Through the mural painting process, participants in El Arco Iris became advocates for their community and provided a voice of expression.

The Boston Youth Mural Crew is a collective of local and student artists that reside in the greater Boston, Massachusetts area. Their approach to mural development is a blend of the community-based and
urban-environmental approaches introduced during the American Mural Movement of the 1960s. Commissioned by the City of Boston and the Redevelopment Agency, these murals are intended to replace the abundance of graffiti throughout the city with visual art that reflects the culture and history of the neighborhoods they are located in (Diaz, 2004). For example, located in Dudley Square—a center for African American culture in Boston—are two public murals that pay homage to African American jazz and blues musicians: *Tribute to Jazz* and *Tribute to Blues*. Many of the students who have participated in this program have received scholarships to various art schools or have gone on to pursue careers in art-related fields (Diaz, 2004). By engaging local youth and community members in various community art and cleanup projects, the Mural Crew program has been able to simultaneously improve the
physical appearance of Boston and develop solidarity among various community groups.

The Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) in Venice, CA is one of the nation’s most prestigious centers of community-based mural development and education. SPARC, a public service, nonprofit corporation, evolved from Los Angeles’s Citywide Mural Project in 1976 as a result of funding difficulties between the City’s Parks and Recreation Department and Citywide (Barnett, 1984). Like Citywide, SPARC emphasizes “team murals with adolescents, children, and senior citizens” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. 55).

In 1976, Chicana muralist, feminist, and activist Judith Baca (cofounder of SPARC) began what would eventually become the world’s longest mural—The Great Wall of Los Angeles (Barnett, 1984). Spanning a half-mile in length, The Great Wall of Los Angeles is located in the Tujunga Flood Control Channel of the San Fernando Valley. This mural chronicles the history of minority peoples and their contribution to California from prehistoric times to the 1950s (Barnett, 1984). The aim of the project was twofold: to give Los Angeles a culturally significant monument and to help the participating youth—all eighty of whom had been referred by local juvenile justice authorities. Participating in the development of The Great Wall helped these youth “gain a new sense of themselves by identifying with the

The Great Wall of Los Angeles (various panels)

Judith Baca with a team of community youths (1976-1983)
Tujunga Flood Control Channel, San Fernando Valley, California
Source: Young & Levick, 1988: 86-87
achievements of their heritage and producing something together that would be widely recognized as worthwhile” (Barnett, 1984: p. 279).

The project was completed in the summer of 1983 and it received national and international attention. *The Great Wall* was recognized by media outlets such as Art in America and Life Magazine (Social and Public Art Resource Center, 2010). In 2000 and 2001, SPARC was acknowledged by the Ford Foundation Animating Democracy and by the Rockefeller Foundation Partnership for its historical, cultural, and artistic contribution to the working people of California (Social and Public Art Resource Center, 2010). Both are currently supporting SPARC in the completion of four additional decade panels (1960-1990) and the restoration of the mural (Social and Public Art Resource Center, 2010). *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* will yet again, provide an opportunity for Angelenos to partake in an ongoing community mural project.

### 2.3.2 Political

Murals have become a monumental vehicle for sociopolitical culture and expression in Northern Ireland (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). The murals grew out of the longstanding, historical conflict between ethnic-national identities that resulted from the partitioning of Ireland in 1921 (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). This regional

![The Great Wall of Los Angeles](image)
separation of identities left Catholic-Nationalists as the subordinate minority group to the dominant Protestant-Unionist ruling class (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). This significantly affected cultural expression and cultural behavior among the Catholic-Nationalist Party (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992).

Political art in Northern Ireland coincided with the cultural revival of the Catholic-Nationalist identity in 1969 (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). Republican prisoners at Long Kesh (political prison for convicted “terrorists” in Northern Ireland) dedicated their time in jail to studying Gaelic, learning traditional Irish folk music, and making various cultural crafts (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). By the end of the 1970s, this subtle cultural revival had spread throughout the region’s Irish communities (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). The Nationalist hunger strike in 1981 further expanded interest in the “roots culture” awakening and consequently the use of art as sociopolitical expression (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). Young Nationalist teenagers and those in their early twenties were the most active in the production of political graffiti and mural art (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). Following the Nationalist hunger strike, the Belfast City Council sponsored “a Community Art scheme that produced over forty murals in different working-class districts” (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992: p. 197). These murals, infused with a growing sense of national identity and struggle, marked the beginning of political murals in Northern Ireland.
Murals in Northern Ireland, though almost always politically-oriented, emphasized several themes during the 1980s. Between 1983 and 1984, murals focused on the intensifying armed struggle between the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Ulster Defense Association and Ulster Volunteer Force—both British loyalist groups (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). By 1985, the murals became overarching representations of the political struggle between the Catholic, Nationalist-Republican Party and the Protestant, Unionist-Loyalist Party (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). Catholic murals expressed the “culture of resistance” while the Protestant murals were a “reactionary product of [the] dominant or hegemonic culture” (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992: p. 190). Today, many of the murals located in Nationalist communities continue to embody the conflict between political and social parties.

Similar to the early murals of the Civil Rights Era, the Catholic murals are concentrated in the region’s most marginalized neighborhoods (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). These murals represent a constant visual and somewhat subconscious reminder to both the community and the patrolling soldiers. To the community, the murals are meant to “educate and elicit support, and to keep the struggle in the mind’s eye” (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992: p. 191). To the patrolling British forces, the murals represent a united statement of strong Nationalist resistance (Nordstrom & Martin, 1992). Journalists reporting on the conflict in Northern Ireland provide glimpses of these political and cultural messages through media outlets around the world.

2.3.3 Artistic

Jack Kerouac Alley is a pedestrian-only thoroughfare between City Lights Bookstore and Vesuvio Café in the North Beach District of San Francisco (Walsh, 2010). The Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC), a local nonprofit organization, is working with the City of San Francisco’s Department of Public Works to fund a Chinatown Alleyway Renovation Program (City and County of San Francisco, 2008). The intention of the program is to improve connectivity, public safety, and the visual appearance of Chinatown by creating safer and more attractive secondary streets (Walsh, 2010). These secondary streets are alleyways that have been redesigned with a variety of landscape features, seating arrangements, and public art. CCDC hopes that this will not only improve the aesthetic quality of the urban setting but also lend to the economic vitality of the district (Walsh, 2010). Jack Kerouac Alley is just one
of thirty-one proposed alleyways identified in the redevelopment program.

Opened to the public in the spring of 2007, Jack Kerouac Alley serves as a clean, safe, and visually stimulating access route between North Beach neighborhoods (Walsh, 2010). Named after the American novelist and poet who pioneered the Beat Generation, Jack Kerouac Alley displays a collection of literary and artistic culture. One of its most notable features is the Chiapas mural on the side of City Lights Bookstore. This mural is a reproduction of *Vida y suenos de la Canada Perla*—originally painted in the early 1990s by a Mexico City artist in the jungle village of Taniperla in Chiapas, Mexico (Walsh, 2010). In 1998, the original Chiapas mural was destroyed during an invasion by Mexican Army troops. Artists, educators, and political

![Chiapas Mural](image)

**Vida y suenos de la Canada Perla (reproduction)**

*Chinatown Community Development Center (2007)*

*City Lights Bookstore, Jack Kerouac Alley, North Beach District, San Francisco, California*

*Source: Tateishi, 2011*
figures were imprisoned and beaten by the Mexican Army (Walsh, 2010). The Jack Kerouac Alley reproduction is intended to provide cultural and artistic awareness for the local community (City and County of San Francisco, 2008).
2.4 Murals, Street Art, and Graffiti

2.4.1 Graffiti Art

Similar to mural art, graffiti is an urban form of cultural, social, and artistic expression that is unique to many metropolitan cities. Graffiti is a controversial art form that has historically been associated with gang activity and vandalism because it is executed in public spaces as a way to claim a particular territory (Latorre, 2008). Although this may be true in specific instances, within the past several decades graffiti has evolved into a legitimate contemporary art form of social and cultural expression (Latorre, 2008). This medium is interpreted by many muralists as a complex urban expression characterized by a fusion of text and images that responds to attacks on individuality and humanity from governing institutions (Latorre, 2008). Like murals, graffiti symbolizes

Laura Rodriguez

Mario Torero, Carmen Kalo (1995)
Chicano Park, Crosby Street, San Diego, California
Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 268-269
protest and affirms the identity of the people (Barnett, 1984). Both community murals and graffiti are “forms of struggle art by which people seek to survive as human in an increasingly dehumanized world” (Barnett, 1984: p. 38). They represent an “insurgence against a society that does not know what to do with the energies of its young, especially those of the inner city and ethnic youth” (Barnett, 1984: p. 38).

Mujer Cosmica; Educacion y los Ninos; Resurrection
Chicano Park, San Diego, California
Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 266

The Wall That Cracked Open
Willie Herron (1972)
City Terrace, Los Angeles, California
Source: Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993: 96
A cultural form of street art, graffiti was conceived in the New York City hip-hop culture of the 1980s. Graffiti has since begun to operate separately from gang culture (Latorre, 2008). In California, graffiti murals had evolved during the Chicano Mural Movement which had been highly influenced by the African American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Latorre, 2008). Concentrated in the barrios and ghettos of the inner city, these urban street murals represented a social resistance through cultural production (Latorre, 2008).

In many instances, graffiti murals have served as visual commemorative or peace-pact symbols (*The Wall That Cracked Open*) among rival gangs or ethnic groups (Cockcroft et al., 1977). This is evident in the works of Unity Among Youth Chicanos (Los Angeles) and the Graffiti Alternatives Workshop (Philadelphia). In both instances, artists and social workers collaborated with gang youths to develop a style of art that drew from the dense and decorative images prominent in traditional graffiti and also presented itself in a more refined and thematic statement (Cockcroft et al., 1977).

2.5 Summary—Murals as Social Art

The history of mural art in Mexico, the United States, and abroad, exemplifies the versatility and longevity of this form of public art. In every instance—whether socially, politically, or artistically

### Above

**Orale Raza**

Frank Ferro (1974-1979)
Estrada Courts, East Los Angeles, California
Source: Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993: 84

### Below

**Unidos para Triunfar**

John Weber (1971, 1974)
Division St. & Hoyne St., Chicago, Illinois
Source: Cockcroft et al., 1977: 164
driven—murals created some form of collective identity and community pride. Through the mural development process, community members come together, share problems, and discover a sense of solidarity (Cockcroft et al., 1977). During the Mexican Mural Movement, Los Tres Grandes used murals to depict the struggles of their people during the Revolutionary War. In the United States during the 1930s, New Deal murals emphasized regional identity through their public works paintings. Holger Cahill, the national director of the WPA/FAP claimed that mural paintings were not a studio art—but by nature a social art form (Berman, 1975). He believed that during its most effective periods, the mural has always been associated with the experiences, history, ideas and beliefs of their communities (Berman, 1975). During this time period, murals serviced as both social and economic tools for empowerment and reform.

During the second half of the twentieth century, murals embodied a more grassroots and collectivist framework for local artist groups to flourish in. This was the case in Los Angeles (Citywide and SPARC) and Chicago (Chicago Mural Group). By the 1980s, graffiti and street art

**Faces of Dudley**

*Boston Youth Mural Crew (1995)*

*Dudley Square in Roxbury, Boston, Massachusetts*

*Source: Boston Youth Fund, 2000*

**Song of Unity**

*Osha Neumann, Ray Patlan, Brian Thiele, Anna Leon (1977)*

*La Pena Cultural Center, Prince St. & Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, California*

*Source: Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993: 13*
art evolved as a contemporary form of mural painting and began appearing in the United States as well as overseas.

The social implication of community-based murals is what distinguishes them from traditional forms of public art. The social consciousness of community murals gives voice and identity to their communities. It empowers the people. Muralist Eva Cockcroft, author of *Toward a People’s Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement*, best described the influence of mural art on society and the individual:

"Community residents have celebrated, loved, and protected [murals] because they have had a part in them. They have seen images of their humanity reflected in the murals. The murals have told the people’s own story, their history and struggles, their dignity and hopes. These people are the oppressed national groups and minorities—the masses of working-class and ethnic neighborhoods, who are in no way part of ‘the art world’ or of the bourgeois art-buying public .... Whether created individually or by a group, [murals] constitute a unified statement of a particular theme. Their aim is social communication; their subject matter is chosen because of its relevance to the community audience” (Cockcroft et al., 1977: p. xxiii).

---

*Chi Lai/Arriva/Rise Up*

Cityarts Workshop (1974)
Madison & Pike St., New York City, New York
Source: Barthelmeh, 1982: 14
Nationally and internationally, murals have served a pivotal role in capturing the struggles and successes of social, political and historical events of a society over time. While the initiation, commission, approach and medium may differ, the mural in of itself fulfills a need for communities to speak and be heard. Just as tattoos are viewed as a form of body art, murals ink our urban environment and send a silent message for all to see, synthesize, and ponder. The future of murals and their importance in community development will largely depend on whether community, civic and private leaders can provide space and opportunities for communities to visually express their identity.

Hitting the Wall

Judith Baca (1984)
Harbor Freeway, Los Angeles, California
Source: Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993: 15
Pickers (from Guadalupe Wall Mural)

Judith Baca (1990)
Leroy Park, Guadalupe, California
Source: Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993: 83
The process for developing the Community Mural Art Program began with an analysis of existing literature on community mural art. This research provides a fundamental understanding of how murals have been used as a device for community development and social expression. The relevance of muralism to the City of San Luis Obispo was assessed by surveying local community members and city staff and planners from the Community Development Department and the Parks and Recreation Department. These findings were then used to guide the development of the Community Mural Art Program for the City of San Luis Obispo.
3.1 Program Objectives

The purpose of the proposed Community Mural Art Program is to provide the City with a step-by-step process for organizing, financing, executing, and preserving mural art in San Luis Obispo. The program should emphasize the symbolic role that the mural would play as a vehicle for community engagement and an outlet for community expression and identity. The participatory development process of the mural would engage local community members with the larger goal of increasing civic engagement and community pride. The objectives for the proposed Community Mural Art Program are:

1) Establish a community mural program that engages local residents in a participatory development process;

2) Establish a process alongside the City’s existing Public Art Fund that would allocate funding for the development, preservation, and restoration of community murals in the city;

3) Enhance the built environment through the placement of murals throughout San Luis Obispo that reflect the region’s culture and history.
3.2 Research Methods

Community mural surveys were administered to City of San Luis Obispo planning staff, Parks and Recreation staff, and community members. Survey responses were anonymous and had been collected on April 7th and April 11th. Each survey provided the following definition of a community mural:

"Public art conceived in a given space and rooted in a specific human context. A mural that engages community members in a participatory development process."

Two different surveys were used during this process. Survey instrument #1 was administered to both the City Community Development Department and the City Parks and Recreation Department. Survey instrument #2 was administered to local community members. Survey instrument #1 focused on existing policies and programs related to public art in San Luis Obispo. It also dealt with program implementation and feasibility. Survey instrument #2 focused on public interest and prominent themes/subject matter for the murals.

3.3 Data Analyzed

The data collected from the community mural surveys was condensed into common themes and trends among the respondents. For each survey instrument, a list of responses was made and repeated answers were tallied. The purpose for condensing the survey results in this manner was to ensure that the proposed Community Mural Art Program best represented the values and concerns of the public and city staff. The common themes and trends are described in detail in the following section.

**Community Mural Art Survey**

**Community Development Department**

**Parks and Recreation Department**

*Source: Tateishi, 2011*
A Shared Hope (Esperanza Compartida)

Paul Botello (1995)
Esperanza School, 680 Little Street, Pico-Union area, Los Angeles, California
Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 197
4.1 City of San Luis Obispo Community Development Department

Community mural surveys were completed by six planning staff members of the City’s Community Development Department. When asked if murals should be treated as a form of public signage or public art, three members stated that murals should be treated as a form of public art as long as it does not contain a commercial message. Two staff members stated that murals should be treated only as public art; and one staff member stated that it should be treated as both. When asked to express their rationale for choosing public art or public signage, five staff
members stated that for a mural to be considered as public signage, the mural would have to have some form of business orientation (business logo, text, advertisement). The rationale for interpreting murals as public art included themes such as community identity, sense of place, beautification of the urban landscape, and art of high artistic quality.

When asked if the City and its residents would be positive about a community mural program, five planning staff members felt that such a program would be accepted by the San Luis Obispo community. Staff members noted that the acceptance of murals would depend on several factors: location and compatibility with the surrounding environment; total financial cost to City and residents; and design approval by the Art Jury and Arts Commission. One staff member stated that acceptance of a community mural program would be speculative due to the City’s funding priorities. If a mural program was developed and implemented, it would compete with various essential services from an already tight City budget.

When asked what resources would be necessary to initiate a community mural program, three planning staff members identified “staff time” and “resources” as primary needs. Of these staff members, two specified an anticipated three to six month time period for developing the program. One staff member recommended that a proposal for a community mural program be presented by a community group to the City Council. If the council approved the program, it should then be developed and implemented through the City’s Parks and Recreation Department. The rationale for the suggested resources and timeline focused on two points: review/approval by the City Council, Art Jury, and Architectural Review Commission; and project financing/cost. It was also noted that a “case-by-case” review process would be available for murals.

Based on the findings from the City of San Luis Obispo Community Development Department planning staff responses, the Community Mural Art Program should:

1) Identify murals as a form of public art as long as it does not contain a commercial message.

2) Use murals as a means for evoking community identity and a sense of place within the city. To do so, murals should be relevant to and compatible with the locations they are placed in.
3) Use murals to improve or “beautify” the city’s urban landscape.

4) Be developed and implemented through the City of San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation Department.

5) Specify an implementation timeline, necessary resources (staff time, materials, etc.), and review/approval process.

6) Utilize a “case-by-case” review process.

4.2 City of San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation Department

Community mural surveys were completed by three members of the City’s Parks and Recreation Department. When asked if murals should be treated as a form of public signage or public art, all staff members stated that murals should be public art. Their rationale included three themes: public enjoyment; beautification of the urban landscape; and artistic information/instruction about San Luis Obispo.

When asked if the City and its residents would be positive about a community mural program, answers varied. One member stated that a program would be perceived well by both the City...
and its residents. One member stated that the City already has a public art program which includes murals (but is not specific to them). One member stated that acceptance of a community mural program would depend on the location and style of the murals.

When asked what resources would be necessary to initiate a community mural program, three members identified funding as the primary concern. They expressed that if such a program was developed, it would require funding from the City’s Public Art Fund as well as from private donations and grants. Additional resources included: volunteer board, local artists, paint and wall cleaning materials, and community member participation.

The rationale for the suggested resources focused on two points: City Council approval and the City’s limited budget. Since the City has limited expendable money, a community mural program would require a volunteer board, workshop, and funding from grants and donations.

Based on the findings from the City of San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation Department staff member responses, the Community Mural Art Program should:

---

**Railroad and Shipping**

*William Hesthal (1934)*  
*Coit Tower Frist Floor, San Francisco, California*  
*Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 57*
1) Identify murals as a form of public art.

2) Use murals as a means for public enjoyment, beautifying the city, and providing information about the city. To do so, murals should be relevant to and compatible with the locations they are placed in.

3) Provide a financing strategy that would acquire funds from the City’s Public Art Fund and from private grants and donations.

4) Specify an implementation timeline and necessary resources (staff time, materials, volunteer board, etc.).

5) Use local artists and community members in the development and execution of murals.

4.3 Community Members

Community mural surveys were completed by twenty-eight community members surveyed in the city’s downtown region. Of this sample, eight respondents were Cal Poly students and twenty respondents were San Luis Obispo residents. Residents who completed the survey varied in age (approximately 13-60). Of these residents, an estimated nine were business owners or employees in the downtown region.

When asked if they would like to see a community mural in San Luis Obispo, twenty-seven respondents stated that they would like to see a mural in their city. One respondent said “possibly.” Of the twenty-seven who were in favor of a community mural, twenty-four respondents felt that a mural would complement the overall feel of San Luis Obispo. Four respondents stated that acceptance of a mural would depend on the artist, location, and theme.

When asked to identify areas in San Luis Obispo that they would like to see a mural located, twenty respondents expressed an interest in seeing a mural in the city’s downtown region. Nine respondents wanted to see a mural in local parks. An additional four wanted to see murals “anywhere” in the city. Additional locations include neighborhoods and along the creek.

When asked to identify themes or subject matter that they would like to be incorporated into a community mural, twenty-five respondents wanted something that would reflect the identity of the San Luis Obispo community. Of these twenty-five, thirteen respondents specified the desire for a local landscape theme (nature, outdoors, agriculture). The remaining twelve respondents specified the
desire for a local culture and history theme (youths, families, Mission San Luis Obispo). Additional themes included music, political and environmental awareness, unity, and the power of the individual.

The rationale for these themes focused around two main points: community identity and beautification of the urban landscape. Ten respondents stated that they wanted a mural to express community identity (unity, expression, culture). Nine respondents stated that they wanted a mural because it would enhance the overall environment of the city by covering “ugly walls” with colorful and inspirational artwork. Additional respondents expressed that a community mural would provide an alternative public art form that did not focus around the mission or nature. The mural and its content would be more relevant to the community that currently lives in San Luis Obispo.

Based on the findings from the community member responses, the Community Mural Art Program should:

1) Locate murals in the city’s downtown region and local parks.

2) Create murals that incorporate scenes of the local, natural landscape as well as reflect local culture, identity, and history of the San Luis Obispo Community.

3) Use murals as a means for evoking community identity and a sense of place within the city. To do so, murals should be relevant to and compatible with the locations they are placed in.

4) Use murals to improve or “beautify” the city’s urban landscape.

---

**A Peaceful Pause**

Ann Elizabeth Thiermann (1995)
Peral Alley, 1221 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, California
Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 119

---

**The Right Valley of the Serengeti Plain**

Carol Christianson (1954)
Field Museum, Central Area, Chicago
Source: Gray, 2001: 89
4.4 Cal Poly
Students v. Local
Residents

4.4.1 Cal Poly Students

Of the twenty-eight community
members who returned surveys,
eight respondents were Cal
Poly students. Of the eight
respondents, seven said that
they would like to see a mural in
San Luis Obispo. Six of them felt
that a mural would complement
the overall feel of the city. When
asked where they would like to
see a mural in the city, seven
stated that downtown would be
ideal. Two respondents expressed
an interest in seeing murals in
local parks; and one stated that a
mural may also complement the
creek.

When asked what they would
like to see reflected in the mural,
six respondents stated that they
wished to see some form of “natural landscape” or “scenic view” (vineyards,
agriculture). Four wished to see an expression of “unity” or “culture” in the
mural. When asked to give a rationale for their decisions, four respondents
stated that a mural would represent an expression of “community” by reflecting
the culture and history of San Luis Obispo. Two respondents stated that a mural
would represent “diversity” within the city.

Of the eight Cal Poly respondents, two students said that they were unsure if a
mural would complement the overall feel of San Luis Obispo. For this reason,
when asked if they would like to see a mural in the city, one respondent stated
“possibly.”

4.4.2 Locals

Of the twenty-eight community members who returned surveys, twenty
respondents were local residents of San Luis Obispo. All twenty respondents
stated that they would like to see a mural in their city. When asked if a mural
would complement the overall feel of San Luis Obispo, eighteen respondents felt
that it would. Two respondents were uncertain.

When asked where they would like to see a mural in the city, thirteen identified
the downtown region as an ideal location. Six respondents wished to see a
mural in local parks. Three respondents stated “anywhere.” One respondent
wished to see a mural in local neighborhoods. One respondent said that they
wished to see a mural cover “every ugly wall” in San Luis Obispo.
The most common themes among local respondents were history/culture and natural landscapes. When asked what they would like to see reflected in the mural, nine respondents stated that they would like to see the history and culture of San Luis Obispo presented in the mural. An additional nine respondents stated that they wished to see some form of natural landscape and scenery in the murals as well. Other common themes included: local events, community members, music, and politics.

Based on the findings from community member surveys (both Cal Poly students and local residents), murals should be located in the city’s downtown region. These murals should draw from the following themes (listed in order of priority):

1) Identity of the San Luis Obispo community
2) Natural landscape and scenic views
3) History and culture

Community murals should be used as a tool for community development in the City of San Luis Obispo. By drawing from local culture, history, and identity, these murals can enhance the physical appearance of the city’s urban landscape. When

---

Homage to the Harbor District Japanese-American Pioneers
Trace Tres Fukuhara (1995)
Harbor District Japanese Community Center, West Long Beach, California
Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 238-239
designed and implemented through a participatory process that engages local artists and community members from the initial design stages to the execution and preservation of the mural, this unique form of public art will benefit both the City and its residents. The following is the proposed Community Mural Art Program for the City of San Luis Obispo.

A Shared Hope (Esperanza Compartida)

Paul Botello (1995)
Esperanza School, 680 Little Street, Pico-Union area, Los Angeles, California
Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 196
Delivery at the Cottage Hotel

John Meng (1993)
Way Station, 80 North Ocean Avenue, Cayucos, California
Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 126
Community Mural Art Program for the City of San Luis Obispo

5.1 Background

The Community Mural Art Program is a City of San Luis Obispo program administered by the City of San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation Department as part of its Public Art Program. Murals produced through this program are city public art projects that are designed, executed, and preserved through a collaborative participatory process. Proposed community murals are subject to the review and approval process specified in the City’s Public Art Manual and therefore must be reviewed by the Art Jury, Architectural Review Commission (ARC), and the City Council. These murals should not be subject to the permit fee specified in the City’s Public Art Manual. The program provides funding for murals that reflect diversity.
in style and media. It encourages artists from diverse backgrounds with a range of experience to apply. Murals approved and implemented through this program become part of the City’s public art collection (Regional Arts & Culture Council, 2010).

5.2 Guidelines

5.2.1 Preliminary Criteria—Eligibility and Funding

Eligibility

A proposal for a community mural should be conceived within the City of San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation Department’s Public Art Program. A community mural proposal would be applicable to all three public art programs: visual arts in public places, public art in private developments, and private donations of public art. All community mural proposals should follow the same development and review/approval processes and should not be subject to a permit fee requirement. This is to ensure equal opportunity among proposal applicants. Any individual or organization intending to create a mural on an exterior wall that is visible from the public right-of-way and within the boundaries of the City of San Luis Obispo can apply for funding through the Community Mural Art Program.
Applicants to the Community Mural Art Program may be:

1) An individual artist or a group of artists; or

2) Students enrolled in an art or art-related program at a degree-granting institution; or

3) Building or business owner; or

4) “Not-for-profit” organization. This includes registered neighborhood associations, citizen-based groups and organizations with IRS 501(c)(3) status. However, IRS 501(c)(3) status is not required. The definition of a “not-for-profit organization” is an organization whose primary purpose is to serve and to provide general benefit to the public and the organization’s or group’s net earnings are not distributed to those who control it (Regional Arts & Culture Council, 2010).

If the applicant meets the eligibility criteria, the City’s Parks and Recreation Department will then determine the project’s feasibility.
Funding

The number of Community Mural Art Program projects awarded funding is dependent on the funds available and the number of applicants submitting each year. Applicants/artists may be funded one time only per year.

1) Community murals approved through this program must be partially funded with public funds and one-to-one match of cash or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. This one-to-one match must be reflected in the budget.

2) Funds will be awarded based on the committee’s evaluation of the mural projects based on artistic merit, community support and feasibility.

3) Eligible expenses may include artist fees, assistant fees, supplies and materials, rental equipment, transportation, installation costs and promotional materials related to a dedication event.

4) Items not eligible for funding through this program include operating costs for organizations; purchase of equipment; administrative costs of sponsoring organization; costs related to projects that have already taken place; refreshments, meals and/or beverages (Regional Arts & Culture Council, 2010).
When identifying funding opportunities, there are several sources to keep in mind (Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993):

1) Local arts councils  
2) Chamber of Commerce  
3) Merchant’s Associations  
4) Private and public donations and grants

If it is determined that a project is eligible for funding from the City’s Public Art Account, the City’s Parks and Recreation Department will assign a project manager to the proposed mural project. If a project is not eligible for funding from the City but is rather financed through private grants or donations, a project manager will still be assigned to the proposed project. The role of the project manager during the initial development steps of the mural is to identify a project budget and timeline.

When establishing a budget, there are various costs to account for (Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993):

1) Wall preparation  
2) Safe scaffolding  
3) Highest quality mural paints  
4) Insurance  
5) Artists’ assistants

If the estimated project budget is within the available funding from the City or from private grants and donations, the mural proposal will then be subject to a preliminary design process.
5.2.2 Preliminary Design Process—Selecting an Artist and a Site

Public Participation

During the preliminary design process, community members should be actively involved in developing the design of the community mural and selecting an artist/artist team and mural site. Before an artist and location is selected, community members should organize in some form of public forum—community meetings and public hearings. During these forums, the community should work together to identify the goals and objectives of the mural: what it should represent; who it is for; why it should be created. To do so, the project manager should facilitate a three to five day charette process focused on idea generation, decision making, and proposal recommendations. During this process, groups of community members should organize in focus groups to identify their values and concerns for the mural (diversity will spawn creativity). The following are the basic strategies of a charette (Sanoff, 2000):

1) Perception of a common goal or sense of urgency
2) Involvement of all factions of the community
3) Full citizen participation
4) Maintaining a sense of individual contribution to the total process
5) Resolution of conflict and redirecting its energy toward community tasks

Once a vision for the community mural has been established, the project manager should lead the community members into the selection processes for an artist/artist team and project site. The community mural vision should help to efficiently and constructively direct these selection processes.
During the artist selection process, community members should ensure that the artist/artist team they agree upon will effectively represent the vision of the mural project. This selection process will culminate with a design workshop for the artists/artist teams and the community members to produce a preliminary mural design. During these workshops, interactive brainstorming and idea generation exercises such as idea lists and verbal sharing should be implemented. During these exercises, participants write their ideas on notecards and then take turns presenting them to the group. Recurring ideas and themes should be identified and then condensed into a concise list of prominent mural themes. Through a collaborative open forum, the artists/artist teams and community members should work together to agree upon final mural designs. The selected artist or artist team should be considered as a participant of the mural project.

Once the artist/artist team has been agreed upon, they will lead community members on a walking tour of the city. This walking tour should function as a self-guided, awareness tour that allows the artist/artist team and community members to identify potential locations for the mural. During the site selection process, the two bodies should reconvene in a community workshop to discuss and evaluate the identified locations. The participatory process used to select an artist/artist team should be applied to the selection of a mural site.

Ongoing community member participation during the preliminary design process of the community mural project is vital. By engaging community members, the executed mural will reflect themes and subject matter that is both relevant and symbolic to the location it is in and the community it represents. A collaborative decision-making process will encourage creativity, broad participation, open communication, and agreement.
Selecting an Artist

The preliminary design process will begin with a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) by the City’s Parks and Recreation Department. Artists or artist teams wishing to be considered for the Community Mural Art Program must submit the following materials (City of San Luis Obispo, 2011):

1) RFQ Application Checklist

   Completed RFQ application checklist listing name, contact information of artist/artist team and all information requested.

2) A Professional Resume

   Each applicant shall submit a professional resume including information regarding past public art commissions, design team experience, exhibitions and installations, awards, grants and education (up to two pages). Teams must submit a separate resume for each member of the team.

3) Submittal of References

   Each applicant shall submit the names of two references on the form provided in the RFQ package. Do not send letters of recommendation. Please ensure information for references is current; inaccurate information may delay the selection process. Teams must submit separate references for each member of the team.

4) Artist Statement
A brief, typed (one page maximum) narrative addressing the following areas:

a. Artist/team approach to the project—vision and intent
b. Artist/team interest in the project
c. Artist/team philosophy on public art, and how their work would be appropriate for the proposed community mural project
d. How the artist’s/team’s experience will complement the proposed community mural project.

5) Digital Images of Prior Work

Ten images of past work that represents no more than five public art projects (relevant artworks may also be submitted if public art experience is limited). Ten image maximum is per application not per team member.

6) Annotated Image List

An image list corresponding to the submitted digital images. Each image description should include: photo number, title, date of completion, media, dimensions, location, project budget/purchase price, commission agency, and collaborators or design professionals, if applicable and a brief description of the artwork. The list must be labeled with the artist’s name.
When reviewing the artist/team applications, the Community Mural Art Program Review Board should prioritize the applicant’s production philosophy and artistic merit. That is, artists or artist teams that utilize a participatory design approach should be selected before an artist or artist team that uses an exclusive design approach. However, if it is apparent that the artistic merit of an artist or artist team is significantly lacking in comparison to an artist or artist team that uses an exclusive design approach, the latter shall be awarded the commission. All artists and artist teams selected to execute a mural under the Community Mural Art Program must use a participatory design and execution process.

The Community Mural Art Program Review Board will select, with the guidance and approval of the participating community body, three artists or artist teams to participate in a design workshop. The purpose for a workshop is to include the public in the artist selection process. For a mural to truly be representative of the community it is to represent, the artist or artist team must be selected in a democratic fashion.

A preliminary mural design workshop will be held to identify prominent themes and subject matter to be portrayed in the community mural. Based on the findings from the community member survey, it is likely that a community mural will reflect the culture, history, and natural landscape of the San Luis Obispo community. Each of the three artists or artist teams will present their draft designs for the proposed community mural based on the feedback from the participating community members. The mural design workshop will culminate with the selection of a winning artist or artist team.
Once an artist or artist team has been selected, the participating community members will select—with the guidance of the agreed upon artist or artist team—a site that is appropriate for the community mural. Based on the findings from the community member survey, it is likely that a community mural will be located in the downtown region of San Luis Obispo or in local parks.

Selecting a Site

The site for a community mural should be highly visible to pedestrian traffic. A mural that is located in a public space and is visible to pedestrians will have the greatest interaction among community members and visitors. There are several
things to keep in mind when selecting a site (Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993):

1) Avoid obstructions (power lines, signage)
2) Find interior storage for paints and scaffolding
3) Water access (washing painting equipment)
4) Less exposure to sun (North facing wall is best)
5) Internal wall damage (water leaks, cracks, exposed pipes) can damage the mural
6) Cleanest surface is best
7) Wall preparation (water/sand blasting, rinse)
8) Pedestrian and vehicular viewing accessibility
Once a site has been selected, the project manager will work with the artist or artist team to determine a more accurate project budget—considering any additional costs related to the artist/artist team and the project site. If the revised project budget exceeds the available funding, either the mural design must be redeveloped to accommodate the available funds or additional funding must be acquired (most likely through a grant or donation). It is suggested that if a project budget does exceed the available funding, the project manager and the artist will work together to stay within the intended project cost.
5.2.3 Review/Approval Process

To ensure that a proposal has the best possible chance for approval by the City Council, the community mural proposal should match the public art criteria prior to the review process. The public art criteria is specified in the City’s Public Art Manual and detailed below. It is the responsibility of the project manager to ensure that the community mural proposal satisfies the public art criteria.

1) The project must be designated as “public art”

2) If so, funding must be transferred to the project budget.

3) Sufficient funding must be set aside from the allocation for artist pre-selection stipends, plaques, and dedication ceremonies (usually $1,000).

4) Funding for a proposed community mural project should be acquired via the City’s Public Art Account or private grants and donations. Prior to the review process, additional funding sources should be identified and a project budget should be established (City of San Luis Obispo, 2003).

During the review and approval processes, the community mural proposal will be assessed by a series of panels. The review panels include: an art jury (appointed by the project manager and the Public Art Coordinator); the Cultural Heritage Committee, the Parks and Recreation Commission and/or the Mass Transportation Committee, as appropriate; the Architectural Review Commission (ARC); and the City Council. If the community mural proposal is approved, the
project manager must then prepare a public art contract to solidify funding, design, and future preservation and maintenance for the mural. It is imperative that a contract between the artist and the site owner is produced. This contract will provide a legal framework for the party or parties that are responsible for the maintenance and preservation of the mural. Community members should be involved in the development of this contract. Because the contract will establish a legally-binding relationship between the City, artist/artist team, site owner, and community members, it is important that this contract reflect the values and concerns of the public.

For additional guidance, consult the Visual Artists’ Rights Act of 1990 and the California Art Preservation Act.

5.2.4 Development Process

Public Participation

The public should be actively involved throughout the development process of the community mural. This process will begin with the cleaning and preparation of the wall’s surface. The City’s Parks and Recreation Department should host a kick-off event where the artist/artist team and community members can come together to prepare the wall for the development process. Preparation would include tasks such as setting up scaffolding, preparing mural paints and painting supplies, and thoroughly washing the surface of the wall. This event would help to increase community awareness and support of the mural project.
Following the preparation of the mural space, the artist/artist team should lead the community members in the actual painting of the mural. To do so, the community members should organize into various groups (three to five persons depending on the size of the mural) and focus on specific sections of the mural. The artist/artist team should then work with each group to ensure that the mural is painted appropriately.

It is also important that an open dialogue with neighborhood residents and business owners who will be affected by the mural is maintained. This will ensure minimal conflict and tension during the production of the mural. The dialogue would also make it easier for the artist/artist team and community members to make adjustments to the mural piece throughout the development process.

**Painting the Mural**

The Social and Public Art Resource Center’s *Mural Maintenance and Inventory Program* identifies various tips for the execution of a mural (Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993). These suggestions are listed below:

1) Drawing (Maquette) to scale  
2) Transfer drawing to wall surface with proportional numbered grid or opaque projector  
3) Artists’ acrylic paints (ie. Liquitex, Golden Paints)  
4) Gesso wall surface  
5) Thin layering with paint

---

*Local youth working with Eva Cockcroft*  
*Which River (1974)*  
*Warrensburg, New York*  
*Source: Cockcroft et al., 1977: 121*
6) Try not to extend paint use (if needed: equal amounts of water and medium)
7) All materials should work well together (coating layers work as a system)
8) Work with local youths and community members (particularly those that live closest)

5.2.5 Preservation and Restoration

Public Participation

Following the completion of the community mural, the public should maintain an active role in the preservation and restoration of the mural. The City’s Parks and Recreation Department should maintain an open dialogue with the community to inform them when mural cleaning opportunities are available. One way to do this is to host an annual community event at each mural where the artist/artist team and the community can come together to clean the artwork. This event would also help to increase the community’s appreciation for and awareness of the community mural.

Once the mural has been completed, measures to preserve, maintain and restore the mural should be set in place. The Social and Public Art Resource Center’s Mural Maintenance and Inventory Program identifies various tips for preserving and restoring murals (Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993). These suggestions are listed below:

1) Artist and site owner must maintain level of commitment to artwork and community
2) Contract should include a clause regarding long-term upkeep of mural
3) Name and contact information should be placed near the mural in case of damages
4) Coating system: isolating varnish protects multiple paint layers
5) Graffiti protection system: wax-based sacrificial coating will protect from dirt, smog, graffiti
6) Remove damage with warm water solution then reapply paints
7) Neighborhood dedication ceremony (local schools, community centers, businesses)
5.3 Summary

The Community Mural Art Program for the City of San Luis Obispo is dedicated to the quality production, preservation, and restoration of mural art in San Luis Obispo. These murals are to be designed by local artists in a participatory process that engages community members beginning with the conceptual stages of the mural’s design and ending with the preservation and restoration of the mural piece. For a community mural to be true public art, it must be designed by and intended for the public it will represent: the community of San Luis Obispo. By implementing highly participatory development and design processes, the Community Mural Art Program aims to reinforce community values while building human and social capital in the communities the mural artworks are located in. Public participation in this program should occur in a collaborative, affirmative group process.

The following resources were used specifically in the development of the Community Mural Art Program for the City of San Luis Obispo:

Faces of Dudley

Boston Youth Mural Crew (1995)
Dudley Square in Roxbury, Boston, Massachusetts
Source: Boston Youth Fund, 2000
Appendix 5.4

Community Mural Art Surveys
COMMUNITY MURALS

Public art conceived in a given space and rooted in a specific human context. A mural that engages community members in a participatory development process

1) Should murals be treated as public signage or public art?
2) Please explain your rationale.

3) Would the City and its residents be positive about a community mural program?

4) What resources would be necessary to initiate such a program? Anticipated timeline?

5) Please explain why.
COMMUNITY MURALS

Public art conceived in a given space and rooted in a specific human context. A mural that engages community members in a participatory development process

1) Do you want to see a community mural in SLO?
2) Would a mural complement the overall feel of SLO?
3) Where? (ie. downtown, neighborhoods, parks, etc)
4) Subject matter/Themes?
5) Why?
Sorrento Ruins

Jane Golden
Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu, California
Source: Young & Levick, 1988: 36
References


El Nuevo Fuego

East Los Streetscapers
Victor Building Downtown Los Angeles, California
Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 100-101


L.A. Marathon Mural

Kent Twitchell (1990)
San Diego Freeway (405) near Century Blvd., Inglewood, California
Source: Dunitz & Prigoff, 1997: 210-211
Unnamed Santa Monica guy and girl

Arthur Mortimer
Ocean & Barnard Way, Santa Monica, California
Source: Barthelmeh, 1982: 52