

**Artistic Expressions in
Public Spaces in
Los Angeles and Some Other
American Cities
(First File)**

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Introduction

This research Paper is intended to study art works displayed in public spaces, such as shopping malls, government and educational institutions, public transportation facilities, and others found in the Greater Los Angeles and some other American cities. These art works are limited to those that (1) are permanently installed, in other words, they do not include art works for temporary exhibition; and (2) are not directly involved in commercial advertisement, in other words, they must not be there for profitable motives or for carrying any commercial message. The photos used in the project are digital pictures shot in relevant places. The Research Paper will deal with the artworks found in the following four ethnic areas: (1) White, (2) Latino, (3) African, and (4) Asian; and the focus will be the comparative study of both outstanding and subtle differences in (1) artistic expression and (2) associated social and cultural message among different ethnic groups in the Los Angeles and other cities in the United States, such as Athens and Atlanta in Georgia, and Louisville in Kentucky.

Part One: Public Arts in Non-Profit Spaces

This part of the Research Paper will deal with art works found in non-profit spaces, which include (1) office building and other facilities, including parks and libraries, transportation facilities, public schools, which are owned and operated by the United States Government at Federal, State and Municipal levels; and (2) office building and other public spaces owned or used by non-profit organizations; the art works under this category might be created by non-profit community organizations or by individuals.

Section One: Art at Educational Institutions

The University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC) are selected for this part of the study.

At the University of California Los Angeles, the Sculpture Garden hosts over 50 of sculpture, mainly made in bronze; the themes of these sculptures range from abstract to concrete, as shown in *Figures 1A* through *1H*; and the styles are mostly “modern” with bulky volumes, rudimentary geometric shapes, and little subtle details found in Renaissance and Rococo Periods works. Near the UCLA Bookstore, another important piece of bronze sculpture is worth mentioning; it is the California Bear (*Figure 1I*); unlike those found in the Sculpture Garden, this piece looks fairly “official” and realistic with a lot of subtle details (hairs, facial expressions, etc.). In addition to the Sculpture Garden which is especially dedicated to arts, many UCLA buildings are by themselves displays of arts, in terms of their exterior decorations, such as sculpted columns and ceilings, mosaic murals, and others (*Figures 1J* through *1L*); and due to the fact that the campus

buildings have been constructed during different periods of time when artistic tastes in the arts community and the general public change, the styles of the decoration range from very classic to very modern. In general, the artworks found at the above places at UCLA are descriptive of the beauty of nature, “art-for-art’s own sake,” and devoid of social or political messages.



Figure 1A. This piece shows a space defined by curvilinear frames and is highly abstract for imaginary interpretation.



Figure 1B. This piece shows a more concrete image which is subject to interpretation.



Figure 1C. Is this part of a human body or of an animal's?



Figure 1D. An interesting study of geometry and spatial relationships in three-dimensions.



Figure 1E. A male head.



Figure 1F. This stone carving shows various facial expressions of young people (maybe the students at UCLA), from happy to sad, smiling to pensive, fresh to tired, etc.



Figure 1G. A headless nude male figure cast in bronze.



Figure 1H. A full-body nude female figure cast in bronze.



Figure 1I. California Bear at UCLA (bronze).



Figure 1J. Wall decoration with brick pieces of different colors in a research building at UCLA.



Figure 1K. Mosaic mural with a fairly modern style, with layout cut into geometric shapes (squares and rectangles), looking like Bauhaus or Modernist style.



Figure 1L. Very elaborated decorative patterns, apparently of very classical or Rococo style, in the columns of many old buildings.

Most of school campuses in California and other states have some of their building decorated with murals, their gardens populated by sculptures and other forms of art. For example, California State University Los Angeles (CSULA) has one describing sports activities (*Figure 1M*); this piece is made of ceramics. Another example is shown in *Figure 1N*, with bronze sculptures at a K-12 facility in Duluth, an outskirt town of the Greater Atlanta Area.

Some of the art works might be donated by foreign countries as tokens of friendship with the United States. For example, a stainless steel sculpture was donated by a group of artists in China to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Normalization of Diplomatic Relationship between China and the United States, and installed on the campus of Georgia State University in Atlanta (*Figure 1O*).



Figure 1M. The sports activity mural at CSULA.



Figure 1N. Bronze sculpture of happy children at a K-12 school building in the neighborhood of Gwinnett High School of Mathematics, Science and Technology, in Duluth, Georgia, in the outskirts of the City of Atlanta.



Figure 1P. U.S.-China Peace and Friendship Sculpture at Georgia State University campus, Atlanta, Georgia.



Section Two:

Art at Religious and Charitable Organization Facilities and Sites

Religious and charitable organizations historically are sponsors of art. Themes usually include religious stories and histories with both people and events; the styles used were traditionally classic, realist, and romantic; however, with the passage of time and changing stylistic tastes of the general public that make up relevant constituencies, modernist styles have been accepted. *Figures 2A* through *2Q* shall explain the characteristics of arts displayed at religious facilities. Facilities studied in this part of the Research Paper include those belonging to Roman Catholic Church, Protestant churches, a Serbian Orthodox Church, a Masonic Temple, a Mormon historic site, and a Buddhist temple. Worthy to mention is the coexisting of both traditional and modern aesthetic styles in the art works found in Los Angeles various Roman Catholic Church facilities, which reflects the endeavors of the Catholic Church to adapt to modernity. The Masons were extensively involved in the American Revolution and many other movements for social change; this is reflected in the inclusion of statues of political leaders of the movements such as General George Washington on the wall of the Masonic Temple in mid-Wilshire Boulevard (*Figures 2F* through *2H*). The Mormon Church is of modern origin dating back to the 1800s; and many of its art works reflect the stories of church members, such as their contribution to settling and developing the wild west in the United States, especially Utah and California Buddhist temples traditionally are sponsors of traditional Chinese and Southeast and East Asian arts; and their decorative motifs are characteristic of Asian traditions as well.

In general, art works at religious facilities are relatively more “mainstream” and conservative in the selection of themes and the adoption of aesthetic styles. They reflect the ethical and cultural values of the organizations, and are encouraging of something noble and “transcendental,” and are usually devoid of secular concerns such as commercial pursuit or partisan politics. Typical themes might include love, charity, suffering, sacrifice for the common goods; in addition, in some cases, patriotism could be a topic, such as in the case of George Washington statue on the façade of the Masonic Temple in mid-Wilshire, Los Angeles. The predominant aesthetic styles appear to be classic, traditional, realist and romantic, although modernism has received a limited degree of acceptance.



Figure 2A. Traditional style mural at the façade of a Catholic Church in Monterey Park.



Figure 2B. Modern style mural above the altar of the same Catholic Church in Monterey Park.



Figure 2C. Modern style statue of Jesus Christ the altar of the Great Cathedral of The Angels (top) in downtown Los Angeles and the exterior of the Cathedral with a modern outlook.



Figure 2D. Traditional style statue of Jesus Christ inside the same Catholic Church in Monterey Park.



Figure 2E. Sculptures in concrete of animals from Biblical stories in the children's playground at the same Great Cathedral of The Angels.



Figure 2F (left). Mosaic mural depicting Old Testament stories on the façade of the Masonic Temple in mid-Wilshire Boulevard.

Figure 2G (top right). The Masonic Temple.

Figure 2H (bottom right). The status of General George Washington, a Freemason.



Figure 2I. A three-story high giant mural of Biblical story on the façade of the parking structure of Wright Memorial Hospital (associated with Seventh-Day Adventist Church), with fairly classic and traditional aesthetic style.



Figure 2I. A ceramic mural by the Wright Memorial Hospital, with a modern outlook, and a message of inter-ethnic friendship.



Figure 2K (bottom left). A bronze double-head eagle icon on the door of the Church.

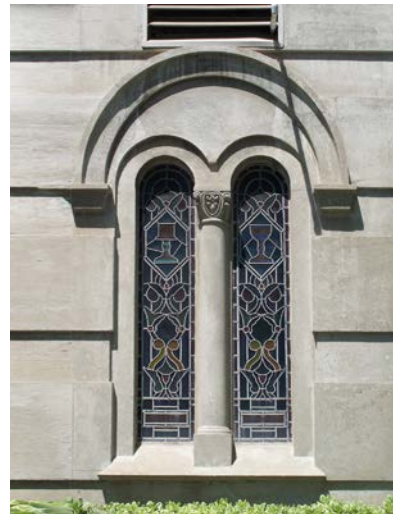


Figure 2J (top left). Ceramic mosaic mural depicting Jesus Christ above the entrance to the Serbian Orthodox Church in Monterey Park.

Figure 2J (top right). The Church where all art works found of very elaborate and elegant classical style.

Figure 2L (bottom right). A mosaic window panel on the Church building



Figure 2M. A giant bas-relief wall created by the Church of Jesus Christ of Later-Day Saints (the Mormon Church) depicting the arrival of the Church members in California as symbolized by the flag-raising ceremony in downtown Los Angeles.



Figure 2N. Statues of lion (a traditional Chinese symbol of authority) at the Bright Moon Buddhist Temple in Monterey Park, California.



Figure 2O. Chinese decorative motifs on the beams of the Bright Moon Buddhist Temple.

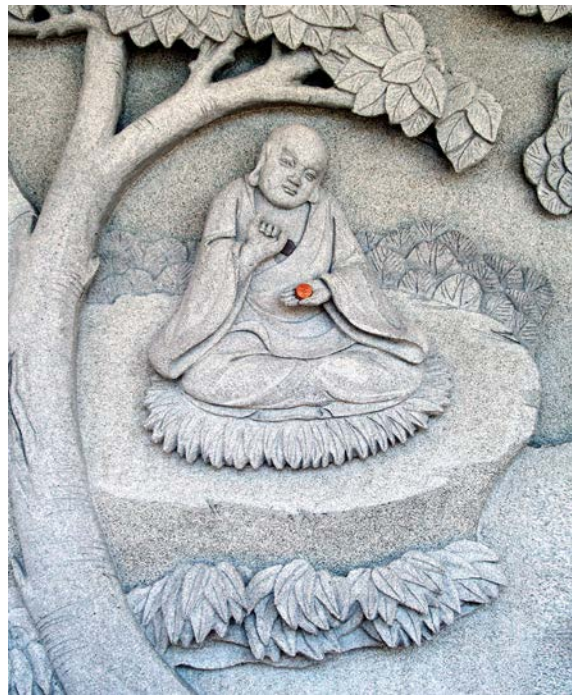


Figure 2P. Bas-reliefs depicting stories from Buddhist Scriptures on the exterior walls of the Bright Moon Buddhist Temple, with pennies placed by the followers.



Figure 2Q. Continued.

Section Three: Art at Public Transportation Facilities

Transportation facilities generally involve a wealth of art works. The County of Los Angeles operates four subway systems (Gold, Blue, Green, Purple and Red lines); each station of these public rapid transit systems is decorated by artworks of different forms and styles, as shown in *Figures 3A through 3U*. The Atlanta International Airport in Georgia also host a wealth of art works including murals and sculptures (*Figures 3V through 3W*); like in Los Angeles, many of the art works carry the message of inter-racial and inter-ethnic harmony; and the aesthetic styles are diverse with both classic and modern outlooks.



Figure 3A. One of many murals on ceramics depicting family life, social activities and natural beauties in California's diverse ethnic communities, in Red Line Stations.



Figure 3C. Ceramics plates depicting life in Los Angeles, at a Metro Purple Line Station.



Figure 3C. Abstract art works created in a variety of materials (sheet metal, glass, ceramics and others) at 5th Street Station of the Blue Line.



Figure 3D. Art works made in marble materials on the ground of a Green Line Station (left and middle-left, with abstract geometric shapes), and at Blue Line Terminal in Long Beach (middle-right and right, with concrete imagery).



Figure 3E. Artistic chairs at a Green Line Station.



Figure 3F. Decorations of fence at a Green Line Station (top, with concrete imageries) and at Union Station (bottom, with more abstract shapes based on curvilinear life forms).



Figure 3G. Geometric shapes related to the themes of technology in the fences and doors at a Gold Line Station in Pasadena.



Figure 3H. A gigantic hand made of metal frames along the Green Line rail track.



Figure 3I. Standing men made of sheet-metal pieces at the Green Line Rosa Park-Imperial Highway Station.

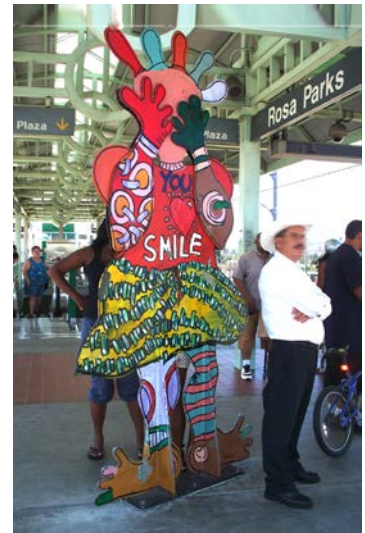


Figure 3J. Abstract art works made of sheet-metals at a Green Line Station.



Figure 3K. Pop art impression by hand on concrete bench at a Green Line Station



Figure 3L. Abstract arts on ceramic pieces with letters and punctuations at the Red and Purple Lines Wilshire-Vermont Station.



Figure 3M. Ceramic painting on a column depicting family life of ethnic minorities at a Blue Line Station



Figure 3N. Mural hanging on posts at the Blue Line Compton Station.

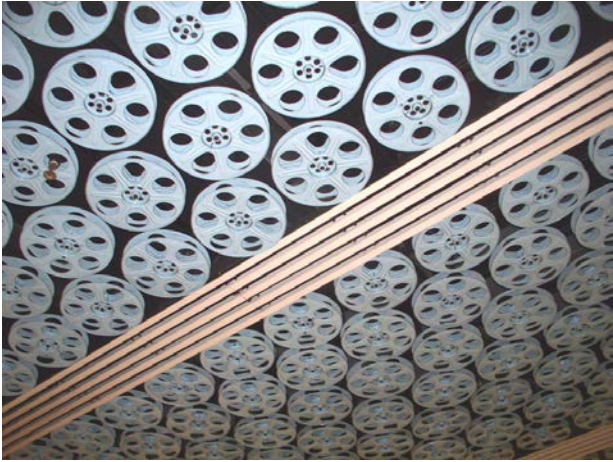


Figure 3O. Movie reels decorates the ceilings in the Red Line Hollywood-Vine Station, reflective of the characteristic of the community as one of the world center of movie production.



Figure 3P. Abstract ceramic and metal art work integrated with water fountain at the exit of the Union Station facing Avenida Cesar Chavez.



Figure 3Q. Ceramic pictures depicting history of California with its American and Mexican heroes at the Red Line Universal City Station.



Figure 3R. This mural at the Union Station carries a message of multi-ethnic solidarity.



Figure 3S. Flower petals and leaves make the roof of the Gold Line Atlantic Station.

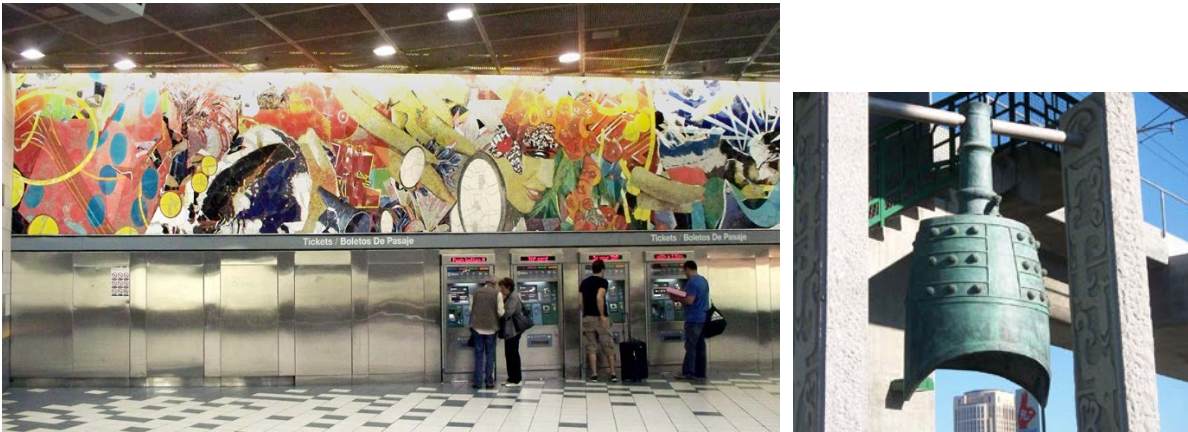


Figure 3T (left). An abstract mural at the Red Line Civic Center Station.

Figure 3U (right). Replica of a Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC–256 BC) bell from China, at the Chinatown Station of the Gold Line



Figure 3V. A mural at the International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia, beautifully designed with fresh colors and a natural integration of soft and curvilinear life forms and straight or circular geometric shapes, and using a rainbow of colors symbolic of harmony in diversity.



Figure 3W. A more traditional looking mural depicting happy life with big smiles among the residents in modern-day Georgia, in contract with busy life in the “rush hours” depicted in Figure 3V.