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### DAE Assignment



*Photo Credit: Condé Nast Traveller*

Austin, Texas is a place full of life, full of music, and full of art. There are many murals around Austin creating a vibrant and loveable city. One mural, in particular, has captured the attention of hundreds of people every week to take pictures next to it with their loved ones or partners. This is the “I love you so much” mural on South Congress Avenue next to another iconic Austin location, Jo’s Coffee. I chose this piece of art for

several reasons which include social media, Queer love, and tourism which I will expand on later in my paper. I will also explain how each of these ideas is incorporated into the artwork itself. I will also describe what this mural means to me, or how I interpret this artwork.

The way I see this mural, instead of being something people want to take pictures with, I see it as a way for people to look at it and say it to one another. Looking at the “i love you so much.”, then turning around to whoever you are with and saying it directly to them. I see it as a reminder to tell the people you love that you love them because you never know when you may not get that chance again. I like to think of it as a way for people to remember that love is the most important thing of all. Loving one another and being kind to one another is an amazing thing that should happen more often. I also like to look at it from the lens of unapologetic love. Loving someone with no embarrassment and no conditions.

As stated previously, the “I love you so much” artwork is a mural, meaning it is a piece of art that is displayed and created directly onto a wall. The words “i love you so much.” are written in red paint across a green wall right outside Jo’s, a popular coffee shop here in Austin. The mural was done by local musician, Amy Cook in 2010, who wrote this for her partner, Liz Lambert, who co-owns that Jo’s. The mural has been repainted several times since then to preserve the fresh look. Simple, yet effective.

This brings me to my point about Queer love. Austin has many places for the Queer community, including bars along 4th Street, as well as many other places that have been declared a safe place for LGBTQ+ people. A public declaration of Queer love is a beautiful thing, and for it to be so public to the point of it being put on t-shirts, stickers made, a real location people want to visit when they come to Austin is a great

thing for the Queer community. Although not many people know a woman made this for the woman she loves, it still plays a huge role in the story of how this piece of work was created. It creates unity between all people, no matter who they love. Although the mural may have not been intended to be a public display of affection for Queer people in general, the mural leaves it up for interpretation, which is always an important part when considering an artifact's rhetoric. It has not always been easy for Queer people to show their love for their partner in public due to the fear of harassment, which unfortunately still does happen, but this creates a new way for people to express the love they have for their partners.

There can also be another level added to this where it reminds people to love themselves. Sometimes people just need a reminder that loving yourself is just as important as loving other people, and with that, this mural is a reminder that even though it may not feel like it sometimes, someone loves you so much.

Social media is a huge part of people's lives in today's day and age and having the ability to show off the person you love is something people do every day, but instead when they take a picture with this wall, you say it best when you say nothing at all, as the legendary country singer Keith Whitley once said. People of all beliefs, races, ethnicities, and sexualities line up to take a picture next to this wall. People naturally like to show off the people they love, and having a piece of artwork that does it for you makes a great social media post. If you go to Instagram and search #iloveyousomuchaustin, there are over 1000 posts under this hashtag and more under different variations of the hashtag. This shows the power it has regarding its social media presence. This brings me to my next point about tourism.

Tourism is a huge part of many cities' livelihoods and sustainability. Austin, being the music capital of the world has a reputation for being weird, and attracts a large number of tourists every year. The “I love you so much” mural is an iconic Austin staple. This creates a certain type of hype around people wanting to go and see it, even if it is just a wall with some words. The idea that people can take pictures with it and say that they were really in Austin, Texas on social media is a major reason why people want to go to South Congress and do so. Alongside the wall itself, there is another iconic Austin staple attached to it, and that is Jo’s Coffee Shop, home of the Iced Turbo. Jo’s has created a name for itself by making good coffee, good merch, and a homey feel in each location. If you come to Austin, you have to try Jo’s coffee. Although social media and tourism tend to tie into one another, there is a difference between wanting an Instagram post and wanting to go to an iconic place in that particular city because it is a sight to see. The way I see it, social media is for other people, whereas tourism is for one's self.

Now that I have explained all the main ideas of my paper and what the mural means to me, it is clear that this mural is not just a meaningless sentence on a wall. There are many different ways someone can interpret the words on the wall because art is subjective at the end of the day. However, there is no denying that in the end, love wins above all and that is what makes this mural so beautiful. People love to love and the “I love you so much” mural lets people express that.