

## Changing Public Perceptions of LA Street Art

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LSMS 5173: Museums, Cultures, and Communities

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# Intro / Problem Statement

- **In this paper, I will explore the interdisciplinary research that corroborates Los Angeles street art's ability to present controversial sociopolitical issues to create dialogue and enact change through community engagement and enhancement. I will analyze and synthesize studies from six different scholarly disciplines: sociology / applied social science, business ethics, art, public health, psychology, and city planning. Public art can be defined as art designed for an open and accessible social space. These findings can be utilized to develop a new public perception of Los Angeles street art that is seen as valuable public art by Los Angeles community members, city officials, art experts, and the artists themselves. Community enhancement aspects of street art can be one tool in battling a depressed social and aesthetic environment in inner cities.**



# Thesis Statement

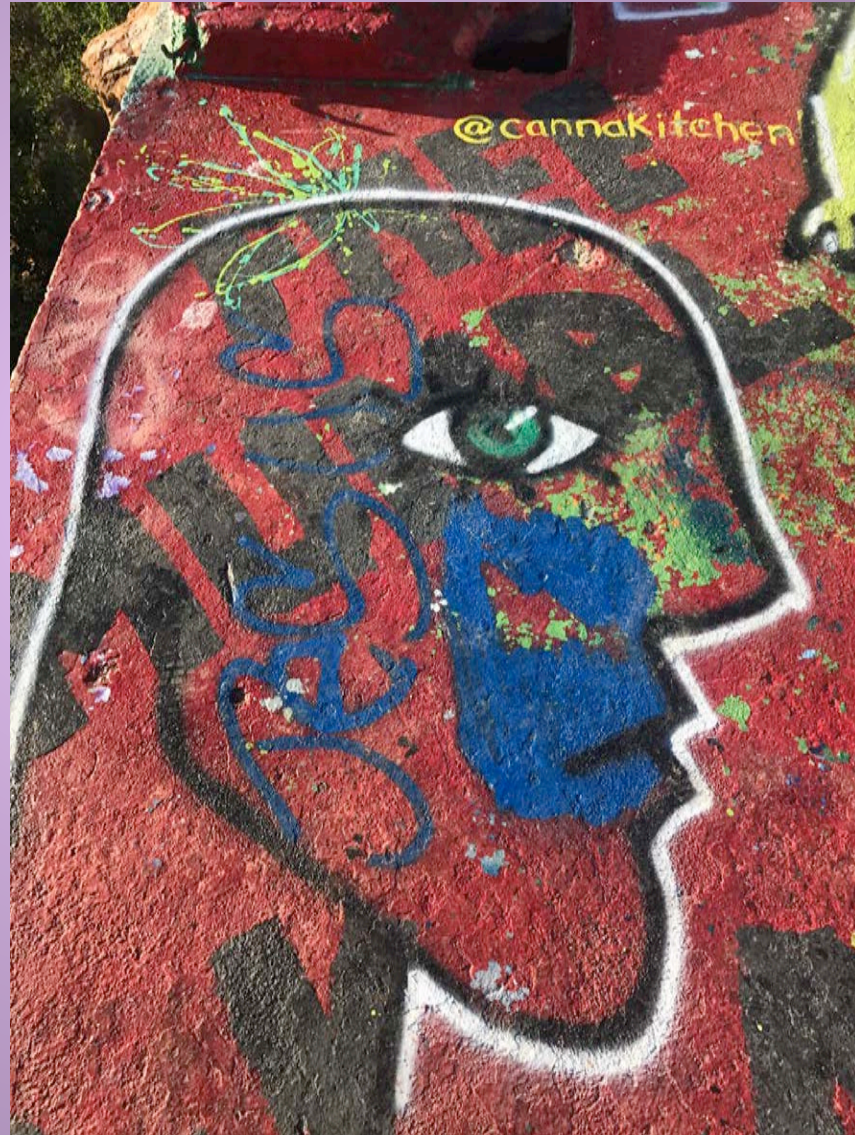
- **A new public perception of Los Angeles street art as valuable public art by Los Angeles community members, city officials, art experts, and the artists themselves needs to be developed to create a healthier social and aesthetic inner city environment.**





# Keywords (using social behavior indexes)

- Street art
- Public art
- Community
- Psychological labeling
- Social deviants
- City planning
- Social construct
- Communication
- Beautification





## Key Ideas: Psychological and socially constructed labeling

- Incorrectly perceived negative aspects of street art





## Key Ideas: Psychological and socially constructed labeling

- Artists seen as social deviants, instead of prophets

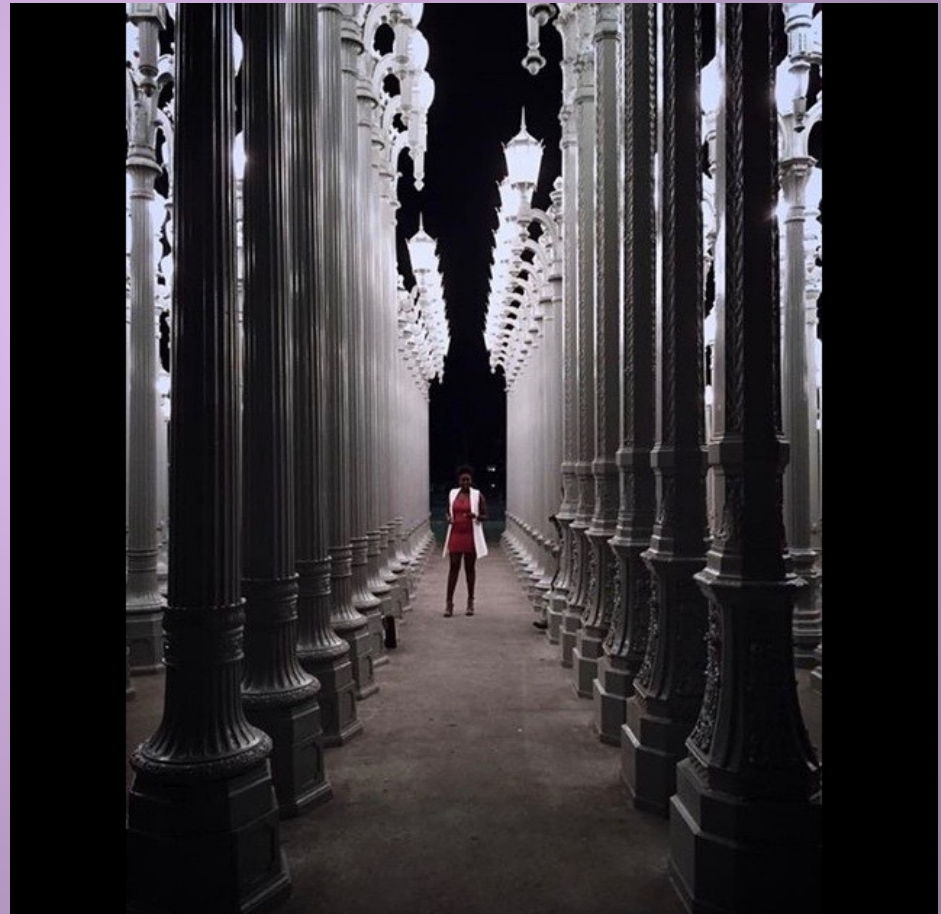




# Key Ideas: Street Art vs. Public Art

## ■ Public Art

- Size and location within a place
  - **Unified spaces (Riggle, 2010)**
- Conversation starter
- Aesthetics
  - **Brain / emotion stimulating color and art in depressed areas. (Parson, 1994. Cooper, 2008)**
- Formal review of art and effectiveness





# Key Ideas: Street Art vs. Public Art

- Communicate about current local issues such as homelessness, poverty, runaways, or campaign finance reform (Cembalest, 2015)
  - **Creating dialogue within the community (Hunter, 2015, Iglesias, 2014)**
  - **Creating dialogue with non-residents (Roberts, 2008)**
    - **where the area is conducive**
- Types and longevity of Street Art employed
  - **Murals on large walls, electric boxes**
  - **Stickers on signs, walls, posts**
  - **Wheat paste on smaller walls, electric boxes**
  - **Stencils on sidewalks, electric boxes, signs**
- The message - as a collaborative, community effort (Cowick, 2015, West, 2012)
  - **Activism**
  - **Creating dialogue within the community (Hunter, 2015, Iglesias, 2014)**
  - **Wheat paste on smaller walls, electric boxes**
  - **Stencils on sidewalks, electric boxes, signs**





# Key Ideas: Perception Change

- **Current view of street art and graffiti as criminality** (Wilson, 2012, Ten Eyck, 2016)
- **Theory behind the process**
  - Groups involved
    - **Changes for each group as a result** (Gartus, Klemer, & Leder, 2015)
- **Community enhancement aspects** (Arslanian, 2015)





# Key Ideas: Perception Change

- **Community engagement aspects (Sowada, 2012)**
- **Process for change (Cooper & Bryer, 2007)**



# + Definitions: Public Art

## Define Key Terms

### ■ Public

- of or concerning the people as a whole.
- ordinary people in general; the community.

### ■ Art

- the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.
- the various branches of creative activity, such as painting, music, literature, and dance.

### ■ Public space

- A public space is a social space that is generally open and accessible to people. Roads (including the pavement), public squares, parks and beaches are typically considered public space.

# + Definitions: Public Art

- Looking at its purpose and public perception
- Public advantage
- Describe public feelings on public art
  - Who is it for?
  - What is its purpose?



# + Definitions: Street Art

## ■ Define Street Art

- Looking at its purpose and public perception
- Negative stigma and socially constructed labels
- Public advantage

## ■ Define Key Terms

- Street art
  - visual art created in public locations, usually unsanctioned artwork executed outside of the context of traditional art venues. The term gained popularity during the graffiti art boom of the early 1980s and continues to be applied to subsequent incarnations.



# + Definitions: Street Art

## ■ Describe public feelings on street art

### ■ Who is it for?

■ Association for Public Art website info on “What is public art?”

■ <http://www.associationforpublicart.org/what-is-public-art/>

■ “Who is the “public” for public art? In a diverse society, all art cannot appeal to all people, nor should it be expected to do so. Art attracts attention; that is what it is supposed to do. Is it any wonder, then, that public art causes controversy? Varied popular opinion is inevitable, and it is a healthy sign that the public environment is acknowledged rather than ignored. To some degree, every public art project is an interactive process involving artists, architects, design professionals, community residents, civic leaders, politicians, approval agencies, funding agencies, and construction teams. The challenge of this communal process is to enhance rather than limit the artist’s involvement.”

### ■ What is its purpose?



# History of Los Angeles Street Art

- Use the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles' site to detail community and outside organizers, meaning of pieces, purpose of pieces.
  - <http://www.muralconservancy.org/murals>
  - <http://www.muralconservancy.org/press>
- LA Times article "L.A.'s street art pioneers paint a colorful history"
  - <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/apr/09/entertainment/la-et-street-art-pioneers-chaz-bojorquez-20110410>
  - "In part the show tells the story of street art flooding mainstream culture and, despite doubts from some of the international art elite, entering the museum sphere. "Just five years ago, street art was an underground thing, very renegade," says one of the show's curators, Aaron Rose. But now, he says, "it's an established art movement." And, speaking like an established art historian, Rose divides the movement into three phases, starting with New York and L.A. tagging in the '70s and culminating with Banksy setting an auction record in 2007 of more than \$1.8 million for a single painting."
- Hyperallergic article "An LA Muralist on Preserving the Local History of Street Art"
  - <http://hyperallergic.com/270950/an-la-muralist-on-preserving-the-local-history-of-street-art/>
  - Looks at history, as well as future, with patron's sponsoring building murals (aka Public Art for all to see!), LA River revitalization project collaboration



# History of Los Angeles Street Art





# Street Art: Perception

- By the artist
- By the community
- By city officials
- By people who are not residents





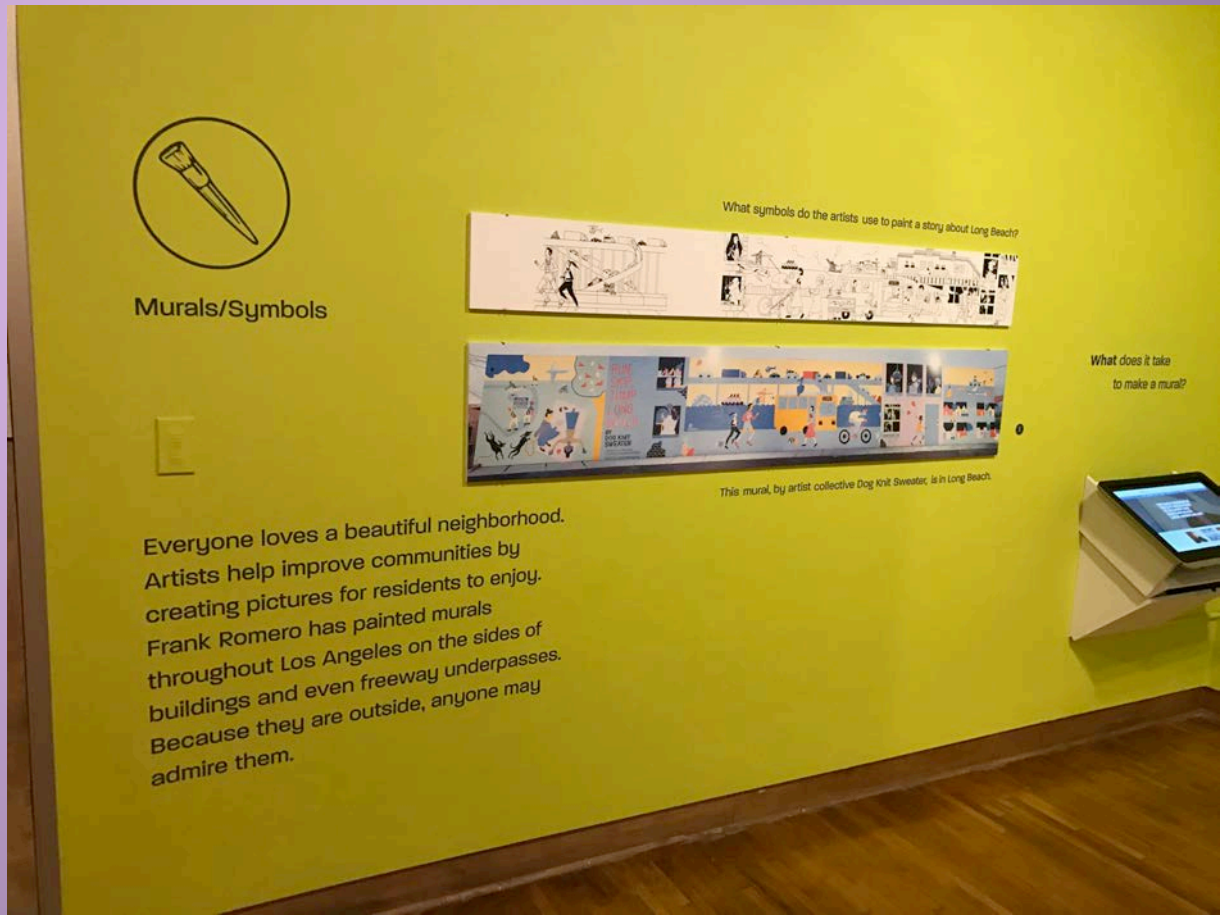
# Street Art: Purpose

- Artist's intent
- What it does for the community



# + Street Art IS Public Art

- Demonstrate how street art is public art





# Changing the perception of Los Angeles street art

- **The purpose of this study is to explore how to develop a new public perception of Los Angeles street art as public art by community members, city officials, art experts, and the artists themselves through its ability to present controversial sociopolitical issues to create dialogue and enact change through community engagement and enhancement. Public art can be defined as art designed for an open and accessible social space. Data will be collected through personal participant interviews, observation of street art and its longevity, determination of initiator of the work, and formal review of the pieces on technical aspects in three areas of Los Angeles: Downtown, West Hollywood, and Santa Monica. [1]**
- **[1] Creswell, John W. (2014). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.**
- **Quantitative Research Question: What type of effect will an accepted public perception of street art have on the citizens, city, art organizers, and artists of Los Angeles? According to current studies, a change in perception will cause street art in Los Angeles to become a mainstream art form where the artists and organizers make large sums of money commissioning work on every building.**
- **Prior to determining how to change public perception on Los Angeles street art, data must first be collected through personal interviews, observations and surveys to determine current perception. This data can be made measurable by assigning a value: zero for the lowest perception and 10 for the highest perception of the art as a factor in presenting controversial sociopolitical issues to create dialogue and enact change through community engagement and enhancement. The data can then be computerized and graphed. This same process can be used after each major stage of the research project with the final graph showing the progression.**



# Conclusion

- **Assumed Hypothesis: According to current studies, a change in perception will cause street art in Los Angeles to become a mainstream art form where the artists and organizers are commissioned to work on all types of structures, and the lives of the citizens are enriched through community enhancement and engagement.**
- **Show the community / city benefits of LA street art**
- **Reiterate that LA street art IS public art and should be respected and funded as such**
- **Demonstrate the steps needed to change the public perception of LA street art**
  - **This will vary for the different groups**
    - City officials
    - Community members
    - Art community





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