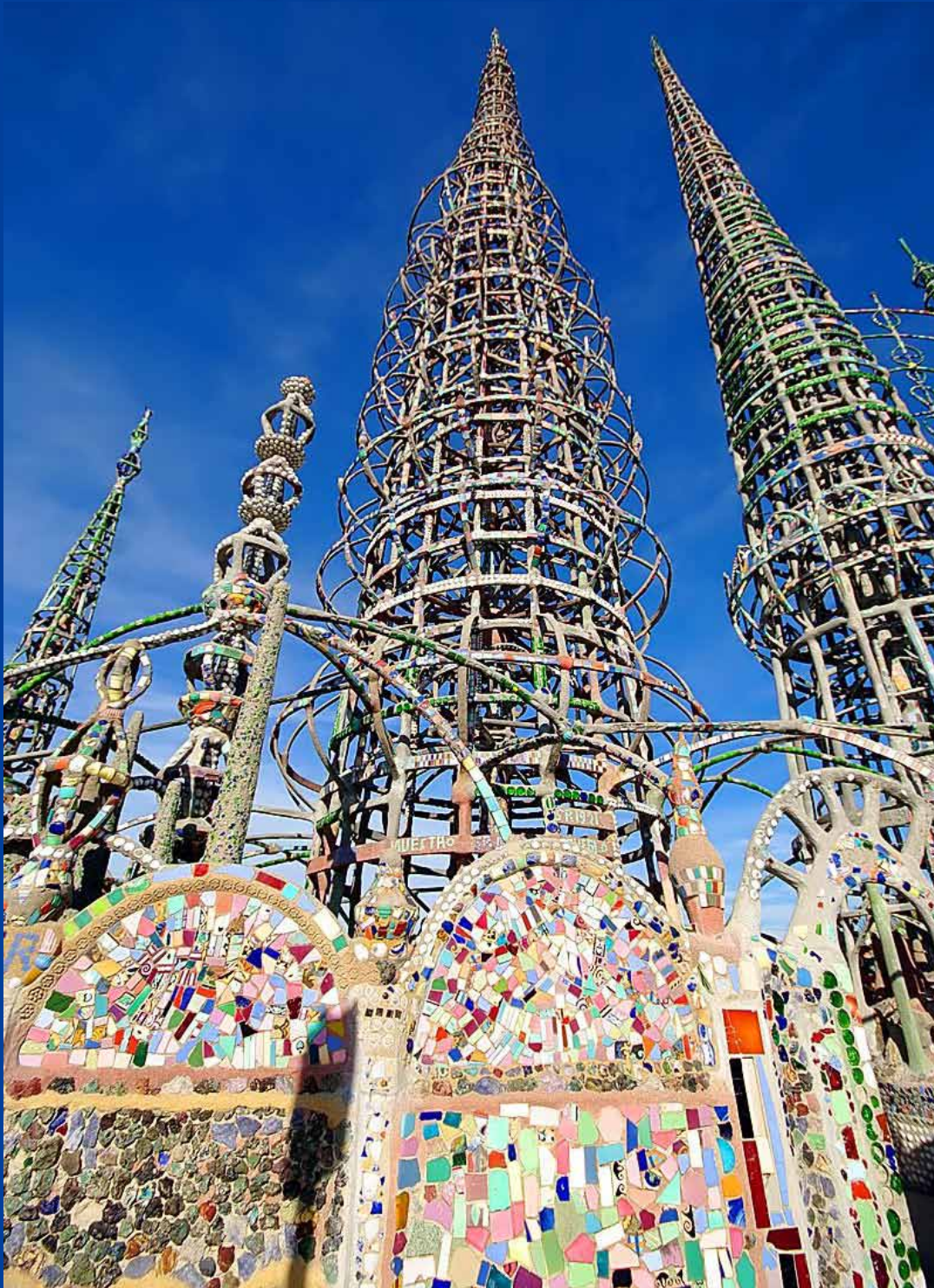


# IAMLA

ITALIAN AMERICAN MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES

## TEACHING HISTORY AND DISCOVERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH PUBLIC ART



Made Possible in Part by a Grant from the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department

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# TEACHING HISTORY AND DISCOVERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH PUBLIC ART

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## WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?

Simply put, public art is art that is found outdoors or in open view, where it can be seen and enjoyed by the public. Public art spans many mediums and styles. It can be abstract or realistic or a combination of the two. Public art can take the form of murals, sculptures, community projects, architecture, memorials, landscaping, digital media, and performances. Public art comes in a variety of sizes; it can be a sculpture towering 75 feet in the air or a small mosaic on a walkway. Public art can be painted, assembled, carved, cast, staged, or constructed. It can be designed to be temporary or permanent; it can endure decades or even centuries or last for only a few months or even a single day.



*Left: Chris Burden, Urban Light, 2008, Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
Right: Joseph Young, The Triforium, 1975, Fletcher-Bowron Square*



Public art often interprets and reflects the history and values of a place, its people, the time period in which it was created, and the social or environmental issues important to its location and people. Public art may be designed specifically for the space in which it is located, or it may be a contrast to its environment.

*Paul Botello, Gerardo Herrera, Adalberto Ortiz, and Gustave Sanchez; The Wall That Speaks, Sings, and Shouts; 2001; Ruben F. Salazar Park*

## WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS OF PUBLIC ART?

Public art has existed since the earliest days of human history, beginning with cave paintings and murals that were created for the purpose of communicating a message to the people who saw them. As society developed, so did public art. Public art often conveyed a sense of power; it depicted historical events, gods, war heroes, and other important people. Early public art in the United States typically took the form of bronze monuments to individuals who were considered to have made valuable contributions to the nation's history. The Mount Rushmore National Memorial, a colossal sculpture carved into the granite face of Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, is an example of public art. Construction began in 1927, and the monument's approximately 60-foot-high faces depict Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln.



*Gutzon Borglum, Mount Rushmore National Memorial. 1925. Black Hills, South Dakota.*

Public art in the United States began to evolve during the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose Federal Art Project under the Works Projects Administration was the largest New Deal program to provide funding for the arts. In addition to creating community art centers and employing 10,000 artists during the Great Depression, the Federal Art Project commissioned an enormous body of public art that represented diverse voices and viewpoints.

## WHY IS PUBLIC ART IMPORTANT?



*Robert Vargas, Our Lady of DTLA. 2013. Los Angeles, California.*

Public art has tremendous value. First and foremost, it is freely accessible. It is often likened to a “museum without walls.” Public art can be experienced without having to pay admission or obtain access to a private collection. In this way, it helps democratize the arts and ensure equity and inclusion. Public art enhances the cultural, aesthetic, and economic vitality of a community. It contributes to a community's identity, fosters a sense of community pride and

belonging, and improves the quality of life for residents and visitors. Public art can act as a voice for the community, reflecting the community's values, generating awareness about its history, and communicating its unique and dynamic culture. Public art can also transform, revitalize, and humanize public spaces. It can make an environment more pleasant and engaging and encourage the public to come together and interact. Public art can draw outsiders, including tourists and other non-residents, to a particular place that they may not otherwise visit.

Today, Los Angeles is home to hundreds, if not thousands, of works of public art, ranging from utility box art and murals in alleyways to monumental works by renowned artists. Public art encourages us to pause and interact with our environment and reminds us of important people and events. Despite their accessibility, the city's vast offerings of public art often remain unappreciated. Public art can become such a part of our everyday experience that we overlook it altogether. We pass works of public art without taking time to stop and look or consider the artist's message.



*Judith Baca, Great Wall of Los Angeles. 1974-present. Los Angeles, California.*

## LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Students:

- Become acquainted with a broad range of public art in their community as well as the elements and principles of design.
- Make connections through the visual arts to extend their learning beyond the classroom; recognize the cultural, societal, and historical significance of art; and connect the visual arts to other subjects and disciplines, such as history.
- Apply the skills and knowledge learned in the visual arts to interpreting the world and gain an appreciation of art as a source of enjoyment, enrichment, and lifelong learning.
- Create artworks that use composition of elements and principles of design that are most appropriate to communicate an idea.
- Create artworks that convey historical-cultural subject matter.
- Demonstrate knowledge of art media and compositional and design elements and deepen imaginative capacities and observational and expressive skills.
- Develop art literacy, hone observation skills, and discuss works of art.
- Expand their visual arts vocabulary to describe art making, read and write about art to reinforce literacy skills, and interpret artwork by providing evidence to support assertions.
- Gain appreciation for works of public art created by Italian and Italian American artists in greater Los Angeles.

## DISCUSSION OR SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- What is public art? Provide a few examples.
- In order for a work to be considered public art, what is the main characteristic it should have?
- What are some works of public art that students have seen? Where are they located?
- Why do people create public art?
- What role does public art play in a community? Ask students to imagine the following scenario: A community commissions a popular local artist to create a water feature at the local public park. The sculpture, in the form of a giant whale, sprays water out of its cement spout. Children run and play in the fountain when the weather is warm. Youth, community elders, and residents in general enjoy sitting by the fountain. The water feature becomes an important community gathering place. Because the artist is somewhat well known and the whale sculpture is considered a noteworthy work of public art, people from other neighborhoods and various parts of the world come to visit the sculpture. When they visit, they often eat at local restaurants and shop at local stores. Then ask students to imagine the community without the whale sculpture, without the added attraction for children, elders, residents, and visitors. Repeat the original question to students, asking them to expand on the role of public art in a community's social and economic spheres.
- Discuss at least two ways public art can serve a community.
- What is the role of art in educating people and fostering a sense of community pride?
- How can art encourage a sense of mutual respect and tolerance in the face of discrimination and unfairness, especially among people of different origins?
- How may the stories or messages in works of public art differ from those contained in many history books? Why do you think this is the case?

## PROJECT I:

Students select a work of public art in their community or elsewhere and create a report about the work. Encourage students to visit the work in person and document it in a series of images or a brief video. The following websites contain partial lists of public art in Los Angeles:

[Los Angeles Public Library Public Art Index](#)

[Public Art in LA](#)

[List of Public Art in LA \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[Public Art in Public Spaces](#)

[Curbed Los Angeles List of Public Art](#)

**Students create a presentation containing images and/or videos of the work and answer the following questions:**

- Who created the work?
- What is the title?
- When and why was the work created? Was it designed to be temporary or permanent?
- Where is the work located? Was it created for a specific place?
- Does the work contrast with or blend in with its environment?
- What emotions, opinions, thoughts, or values are expressed in the work? Does it include recognizable people, places, or events?
- How can its meaning or subject matter be interpreted? What evidence or visual clues support this conclusion?
- What is the medium?
- How does the work reflect the time in which it was created?
- How does the work reflect the community in which it is located?
- What role does the work play in the community in which it is located? (Is it a source of community pride? Does it draw people to the community? Is it a popular gathering place for the community?)

## PROJECT II:

Students create a temporary work of public art for their school (e.g., a mural on butcher paper or in digital format) that conveys the history of their community, including the many cultures that have called it home over the years or an important event in history.

**Step 1:** Divide the class into appropriate size groups.

**Step 2:** Research. Students will first need to research and create an overview of the key events and individuals in their community's history. If this project proves too broad, students can select one individual or time period to portray or a specific aspect of the community, such as the various cultures that have lived there over the years. Students can also be assigned or select a topic or event in national history to depict in their project. In either case, students should demonstrate an understanding of key facts before commencing.

**Step 3:** Proposal. Students present a brief proposal of their public art project, imagining that they are trying to persuade a community group or government agency to grant them permission to create the work of public art. In the proposal, the students should address the following:

- What is the public art project they are proposing?
- Is it a mural, a sculpture, a media installation, something else?
- What materials will be utilized to create the work?
- Is it abstract, representational, or a combination of the two?

- Which principles of design will students utilize to communicate their idea(s)?
- Where will the proposed work of public art be located?
- Students should also include a sketch, rendering, or model of the project.
- How will students ensure the work meets the criteria of public art (e.g., to be visible and accessible to the public)?
- What is the subject matter the art project will depict? Students should explain the design of their mural and include a description of its significant historical figures, people or groups, landmarks or other objects, and any text they plan to include on the mural.
- Why is it important for the public to know about this subject? Students should provide concrete reasons the proposal should be approved. How will the mural call attention to an important topic, person, or injustice? How do students imagine the work will spark important conversations?

**Step 4:** Students create a temporary public artwork appropriate to the scope of their studies and abilities, as determined by their teacher.



## WORKS OF PUBLIC ART IN LOS ANGELES CREATED BY ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN ARTISTS

During the mid-1800s, California remained a remote outpost in the West. In 1860, only 4,385 people lived in Los Angeles, a miniscule population compared to New York's population of 813,669 and San Francisco's population of 56,802. To draw people to the region, Southern California's promoters, a group that included railroad companies, civic leaders, real estate investors, and businesspeople, began marketing the region as a "new Italy" and "our Italy," meaning the Italy of the United States. In print advertisements and other media, they compared Southern California's climate and geography with that of Italy. The campaign presented an image of Southern California that was glamorous and romantic and succeeded in drawing thousands of people to the region, helping to transform it into the cultural and economic capital of the West.



*Royce Hall, University of California, Los Angeles.*



*Gondoliers on the Canal in Venice, California. 1909.  
(Security Pacific National Bank Collection).*

As part of the building craze that followed, architects designed scores of homes that were Italian-Mediterranean in appearance, along with a range of other buildings that were replicas of famous buildings in Italy. For instance, Royce Hall at UCLA was built in 1929 and was modeled after the Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, Italy. Built in 1927, St. Andrew's Church in Pasadena was modeled after the Church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin in Rome. The legacy of this fascination with Italy is still apparent in Southern California. Italian-named streets such as Capri and Amalfi can be found in various parts of the city. There are also a number of Italian place names, including the city of Fontana, which is Italian for "fountain," and Italian-themed neighborhoods, such as Abbot Kinney's Venice, which was originally constructed as a resort with gondolas and canals. Today, many builders continue to utilize Italian themes in construction projects; the DaVinci and Orsini apartment complexes in downtown Los Angeles are two examples.

Many Italian and Italian American architects and artists have created enduring works of public art in the Southland. Their creations reflect different ideas, styles, and eras.

### **Sabato Rodia, *The Watts Towers (Nuestro Pueblo)*, Watts**

Sabato Rodia arrived in the United States with his brother in the 1890s and worked in the coalfields of Pennsylvania. Around 1921, Rodia settled in Watts, a neighborhood in South Los Angeles. He purchased a small triangular-shaped lot on East 107th Street and single-handedly began constructing a large assemblage structure he called *Nuestro Pueblo*, Spanish for “Our Town.” Over the course of 33 years, Rodia worked on the 17 interconnected steel and mortar spiraling structures without the aid of scaffolding, building one level at a time, eventually reaching nearly 100 feet high. Finding inspiration in items discarded by others, Rodia embellished the towers with 70,000 repurposed objects, including colored glass, shells, broken dishes and bottles, pottery and tile fragments, corncobs and handprints, bed frames, and automobile parts. He also built fountains, plazas, walkways, and a gazebo, all within his tiny tenth of an acre. In 1954, Rodia declared the structures finished, sold the property to a neighbor for \$1,000, and left Watts.



*Simon Rodia, Watts Towers. 1921-1954.  
Watts, California.*

In 1959, an actor and director purchased the towers for \$3,000 in an effort to preserve Rodia’s work. He learned that the City of Los Angeles had plans underway to demolish the structures after declaring them an “unauthorized public hazard,” built without a “rational plan.” As controversy raged, the city consented to a test to assess the towers’ structural integrity. The test revealed that the towers, built by one man with no engineering experience, without welding, bolts, or rivets, could withstand five tons of strain, the equivalent of sustained, 76-mile-an-hour winds. The city revoked the demolition order, and the Watts Towers later opened to the public. Although his work later received prestigious accolades, Rodia had lost interest in the towers and died quietly in Martinez, California, in 1965. Today, the Watts Towers are a U.S. National Historic Landmark, part of the Simon Rodia State Historic Park and managed by the Cultural Affairs Department of the City of Los Angeles. They are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and are considered one of Southern California’s most culturally significant public artworks and one of the nation’s finest works of folk art.

### **Leo Politi, *The Blessing of the Animals*, Downtown Los Angeles**

Leo Politi was born Atiglio Leoni Politi in Fresno, California. At the age of seven, Politi returned with his family to his mother’s village near Milan, where his love for drawing blossomed. When Politi was a teenager, the family relocated to London. Politi explored London’s museums, relishing the works of Van Gogh and other masters. He received a scholarship to attend the National Art Institute in Italy, and after completing his education, he decided to move to California. Traveling by boat, Politi became acquainted with Latin American society and grew enamored of Mayan culture. The rich earth tone hues became his palette throughout the 1930s and 1940s. After arriving in Los Angeles, Politi worked as an artist on Olvera Street, sketching and painting tourists and selling his work. The commonalities between



*Leo Politi, Blessing of the Animals. 1978. Los Angeles, California.*

place at Olvera Street just before Easter every year since 1938. Politi painted a colorful mix of people—musicians, merchants, children, and local residents—standing in line waiting to have their rabbits, dogs, goats, and other animals blessed.

### **Arnaldo Pomodoro, *Colpo d'Ala*, Downtown Los Angeles**

Born in Italy in 1926, Arnaldo Pomodoro worked as a scenery designer for theatrical productions and studied at the Art Institute in Pesaro. In the late 1960s, Pomodoro began to shift his artistic medium to monumental sculpture, creating pieces that would stand in front of the Farnesina in Rome, Trinity College in Dublin, and The United Nations building in New York City. Pomodoro's sculptures have earned prizes and awards from institutions across the globe, and he has had exhibitions across Europe, the United States, Australia, and Japan.

In 1988, Italian Prime Minister Ciriaco De Mita commissioned Pomodoro to create a piece that would become a gift to the United States in gratitude for the relief it provided Italy following World War II. Pomodoro offered a piece titled *Colpo d'Ala* (Wing-Beat). *Colpo d'Ala*, which resembles a bird ready to take flight, symbolizes peace and freedom in the two nations. The work encompasses many of Pomodoro's signature techniques and themes, such as including texturally smooth and complex surfaces and suggesting a piece would have a natural movement yet including mechanical shapes. *Colpo d'Ala* can be seen outside the Department of Water and Power Building on the corner of 1st and Hope Street.



*Arnaldo Pomodoro, Colpo d'Ala. 1988, Los Angeles, California.*

## Rico Lebrun, *Genesis*, Pomona College

Federico “Rico” Lebrun was born in Naples, Italy, where he began his first formal training in art. He later moved to New York City and worked as a commercial artist for *Vogue*, *The New Yorker*, and other magazines. In 1936, Lebrun accepted a teaching position at the New York Art Students’ League and decided to return to fine art. Two years later, he relocated to Southern California, where he received his first solo exhibition at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Many successful exhibitions followed, and Lebrun became a leading figure in Los Angeles’s modernist art movement. In the late 1940s, Lebrun’s art became increasingly devoted to human suffering, social justice, and religious subjects. Over the next three years, he worked on the *Crucifixion* series, which culminated in an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

In 1958, Lebrun received a commission for a mural at Pomona College. He selected the book of *Genesis* to provide the narrative for what was to be an intensely personal, aesthetic, and political work. Painted in tones of black, the mural, titled *Genesis*, depicts subject matter from the biblical stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah and the flood. The mural’s central figure is a battered, post-flood Noah, who embraces a child protectively amid the rubble of the ark. In the background are doomed figures attempting to escape the flood. The mural is one of his most celebrated works. A self-described humanist, Lebrun believed that art should address and rectify the evils of the modern world.



Rico Lebrun, *Genesis*. 1960. Pomona College. Claremont, California. Courtesy of Pomona College

## Alberto Biasi, *The Immigrants*, Chinatown

Born in Italy, Alberto Biasi was influenced by the Dada movement and was among the first to explore the possibilities of optical illusions in painting and sculpture. He is considered an Italian pioneer of Kinetic and Op Art. His works offer the illusory sensation of movement and often address the passage of time. In 1970, while visiting Los Angeles, Biasi was commissioned to create a large sculptural work for the newly inaugurated Italian American cultural center, Casa Italiana, which is located adjacent to St. Peter’s Italian Church northeast of downtown Los Angeles, a neighborhood that was once the city’s Little Italy. The steel and concrete sculpture, titled *The Immigrants*, was completed in 1971. Its allegorical figures symbolize immigrants’ gratitude for being in America and



Alberto Biasi, *The Immigrants*. 1971. Los Angeles, California.

their collective voices raised in protest against the injustice and violence they experienced in the United States. Behind the figure is a train wheel and the figures of a sailor, a farmer, a mason, a miner, and a railway worker, all representing the role of immigrant labor in



**Humberto Pedretti, *The Doughboy*. 1924.  
Los Angeles, California.**

industrialization. The figures on the viewer's right represent the immigrants' spiritual life and personal values, including sacrifice, struggle, education, family, and faith. The figures in the sculpture are deliberately abstracted, so the piece can serve as a universal monument to all immigrants. An inscription under the sculpture reads, "The huddled masses came in pursuit of happiness, and to stake out freedom's claim. Their restless heirs push on mankind's ancestral quest for peace must yet be won."

### **Humberto Pedretti, *Doughboy*, Downtown Los Angeles**

At the age of 15, Humberto Pedretti ran away from his home in Brescia, Italy, to study art in Milan. Pedretti went on to live and work in many places, including Switzerland, Germany, and Mexico City, before eventually settling in Los Angeles in 1922. Pedretti taught art at a small art school in Hollywood and was later commissioned by the Association of the Army of the United States to design a statue to commemorate the people of Los Angeles who had served in World War I. The

statue, entitled *Doughboy*, a term for American infantry soldiers during the war, was unveiled in 1924. It depicts a soldier standing upright on a stone pedestal and holding a flag. Pershing Square in Downtown Los Angeles was selected to be the location of the statue due to its significance as a rallying place for the sale of Liberty Bonds during World War I.

### **Salvatore Scarpitta, *Bas-reliefs*, Downtown Los Angeles**

Born in Sicily in 1887, Salvatore Cartaino Scarpitta studied art in Italy before settling in New York City in 1910, where he worked as a sculptor and portraitist. After nearly a decade in New York, Scarpitta moved to Los Angeles, where he was commissioned to create elaborate bas-relief pieces for the Los Angeles Stock Exchange, which broke ground in October of 1929 as the nation's economy plummeted into the Great Depression. Scarpitta created three granite panels that loom over the building's 12-foot-high bronze front doors. The largest piece, *Finance*, is in the center; to the right is the panel entitled *Production*; and on the left is *Research and Discovery*. The stock exchange vacated the building in 1986, but the original structure and Scarpitta's work remain intact at 618 S. Spring Street. Scarpitta also sculpted nine granite figures for the facade of the Los Angeles County General Hospital, which were unveiled for the first time upon the building's completion in 1933. Above the front doors are three figures: an elderly man, a woman holding a baby, and an angelic figure with its hands clasped in prayer. The central figures are surrounded by the likenesses of prominent contributors to Western medicine. The hospital still stands today at 1200 North State Street. In 1939, toward the end of his life, Scarpitta also completed a bas-relief of St. John at St. John Episcopal Church, located at 514 W. Adams Blvd. At various points in his career, Scarpitta's work was exhibited in museums from New York to Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

## Mauro Staccioli, *Untitled*, Santa Monica

Mauro Staccioli, born in Italy in 1937, began his artistic career at prestigious art institutions throughout Italy. It was not until the middle of his life, however, that he embraced sculpture as his preferred medium. From 1960 to 1979, Staccioli began exploring how sculpture can change or improve the space or community that it is placed within. Staccioli installed *Muro*, an eight-meter-high concrete wall placed at the entrance of the Italian Pavilion, at the XXXVIII Biennale Internazionale D'Arte, an international art exhibition in Venice. Staccioli soon began receiving international recognition in exhibitions, installations, and collaborations in countries from Germany, Britain, and Israel to France and the United States.

In 1993, the city of Santa Monica unveiled Staccioli's piece *Untitled (Homage to Jack Kerouac)*. The installation was coordinated by the City of Santa Monica Arts Division and donated by Staccioli himself. *Untitled* is composed of two large half-moon structures made of lumber and cement and painted a rusted red color. The two structures are seemingly woven between the palm trees around them to symbolize, as with many of Staccioli's sculptures, the juxtaposition of urban society and nature.

## Ettore Serbaroli, Murals, Mid-City, Beverly Hills, and Santa Monica

Ettore (Hector) Serbaroli was raised in Rome and studied with master painters of the early 1900s. At the age of 26, Serbaroli was commissioned to work on murals for the Teatro Nacional at the Palacio de las Bellas Artes in Mexico City, but soon after the Mexican Revolution began, he left for other professional opportunities in California. Serbaroli completed many projects while living in San Francisco, the most notable of which was painting the ceiling of the legendary Hearst Castle. Hollywood soon beckoned, and Serbaroli established himself as one of the most respected and sought after set artists in Hollywood, working for nearly every major studio on films such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935) and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939).



*Alberto Burri, Grande Cretto Nero. 1976.  
University of California, Los Angeles.*

In the late 1940s, Serbaroli's work shifted primarily to churches and other religiously affiliated buildings. Serbaroli's work can still be seen at St. Monica Catholic Church in Santa Monica, the Rosary Chapel murals at Immaculate Conception Church on West 9th Street in Los Angeles, and the stained-glass windows at Church of the Good Shepherd in Beverly Hills.

## Alberto Burri, *Grande Cretto Nero* (Large Black Cretto), UCLA sculpture garden

Born in 1915, Alberto Burri is considered one of the most influential artists of post-war Italy. Although Burri enjoyed art, he earned a medical

degree in 1940, at the cusp of World War II, and was summoned to serve as a medic in the Italian Army. Burri was captured by Allied forces in 1943 and was eventually transferred to a prisoner of war camp in Texas. Burri used art as a way of coping during his imprisonment, but he was limited to readily available materials, such as cardboard, bark, and cloth. He continued using these unconventional materials following his release and repatriation to Rome in 1946. Burri's work challenged what was common in the contemporary art world at the time, and people took notice. He began exhibiting in galleries around Rome and in 1953 received his first solo exhibition in Chicago.

In 1977, Burri donated his piece *Grande Cretto Nero* (Large Black Cretto) to the University of California, Los Angeles. *Grande Cretto Nero* is a visually striking wall that stands at 16 by 49 feet at the far north side of the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden. The wall is composed of 700 black pieces of fired ceramic, arranged in a way that resembles a cracked desert floor.

### **Pietro Consagra, *Difficult Dialogue*, UCLA sculpture garden**

Pietro Consagra was an abstract sculptor born in Sicily in 1920. As a young artist, he attended art school in Palermo before moving to Rome in 1944, shortly after the city was liberated from Nazi rule. During his time in Rome, Consagra met many other influential artists, and in 1947, he and seven others formed the group Forma I. The group released a statement defending abstractionism and declaring themselves formalists, or artists who believe sculpture begins and ends with the figure's form and reject additional decorations, like color. Consagra typically worked with wood, iron, and bronze and adhered to formalist ideals. Consagra's piece, *Colloquio Duro* (Difficult Dialogue), was gifted to the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1967. The piece is a bronze relief, completed in 1959, and can be seen in the Franklin D. Murphy sculpture garden.

### **Francesco Somaini, *Verticale-Assalonne* (Vertical Absalom), UCLA sculpture garden**

Born in 1926, Francesco Somaini was an important figure in the post–World War II surrealist art movement. During the early 1950s, Somaini began exploring abstractionism, and after participating in the XXVIII Biennale of Venice in 1956, he gained more critical acclaim. Somaini exhibited all over the world during the 1960s and became affiliated with the Art Informel movement. The style emerged as many artists were processing the personal and societal traumas of the second World War and moved away from creating traditional, realistic art to exploring more surreal, fantastical styles. In the 1970s and 1980s, Somaini focused on creating larger scale sculptures. Somaini's piece, *Verticale-Assalonne* (Vertical Absalom), completed in 1959, was gifted to the University of California, Los Angeles, a decade later. It is composed of a large piece of iron carved and sculpted in a way that makes it appear extremely malleable.

### **Eliseo Mattiacci, *L'occhio del Cielo* (Eye of the Sky), UCLA**

Born in Italy in 1940, Eliseo Mattiacci did not like to claim belonging to one art movement or another. His work greatly influenced the contemporary art revival movement in Italy in the late 1960s and early 1970s through a number of large-scale works, including *Tubo*, a bright yellow pipe that twisted its way through an entire gallery space, covering over 500 feet. Mattiacci received international praise and exhibitions in Paris, Japan, and Brazil. In 2005, he created *L'occhio del Cielo* (Eye of the Sky), and gifted the piece to the University of California, Los Angeles. The piece is composed of three large metal circles that fit inside one another in descending size order, much like an iris and a pupil. It can be found adjacent to Royce Hall.



*Mark di Suvero, Pre-Natal Memories. 1976. Los Angeles, California.*



### **Mark di Suvero, *Prenatal Memories*, Downtown Los Angeles**

Mark di Suvero was born in China to Italian parents in 1933. He moved to the United States at the brink of World War II and began his art career in New York City. Di Suvero worked in construction to support himself, and his experience in industrial environments fueled his interest in sculpture. Today, his public art pieces can be found all over the world. *Prenatal Memories* is located at California Plaza on South Grand Avenue. The piece is constructed of welded steel and weighs around 16,000 pounds.

### **Frank Stella, *Dusk*, Downtown Los Angeles**

Born in Massachusetts in 1936, Frank Stella made a name for himself as an abstract artist who used a revolutionarily wide variety of textures, shapes, and colors. He began exhibiting in New York and was the youngest artist to ever have a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Today, his pieces are in the permanent collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Tate Gallery

in London. A replica of Stella's piece, *Dusk*, adorns the side of the Gas Company Tower on 5th Street in downtown Los Angeles and is one of the largest murals in the city. The original work is a collage of photographs, paper, tape, pushpins, and metal scraps and is part of a series Stella called Moby Dick. Each piece in the series is named after a chapter of Herman Melville's 1851 novel of the same name. *Dusk* covers about 35,000 feet of wall space—about the length of a city block.

*Frank Stella, Dusk. 1991.  
Los Angeles, California.*

### **Jasper D'Ambrosi, *Jacob's Ladder*, San Pedro**

Jasper D'Ambrosi was a painter and sculptor who was born to Italian immigrants in Wilmington, California, in 1926. After graduating from the University of California, he opened a printing and design business while working for Douglas Aircraft, and he later became a full-time artist. D'Ambrosi's sculptures can be seen in various states, including Kansas and Arizona. Tragically, D'Ambrosi developed a terminal illness, likely due to years of exposure to toxic art supplies. Shortly before his death in 1986, D'Ambrosi began working on a piece for the American Merchant Marine Veterans Memorial. The piece, entitled *Jacob's Ladder*, seeks to honor the work of United States Merchant Marines during times of peace and war. The statue depicts two merchant marines climbing a ladder to safety after having been tossed into a swirling sea. The ladder they are climbing is known as a Jacob's Ladder, in reference to the ladder that appears to Jacob in the book of Genesis and leads to heaven. *Jacob's Ladder* was completed by D'Ambrosi's sons in 1987 and can be seen on the corner of South Harbor Boulevard and West Sixth Street.



*Jasper D'Ambrosi, Jacob's Ladder. 1987.  
San Pedro, California.*



## USEFUL VOCABULARY

**Abstract:** A form of art that is not realistic and represents subjects through shapes, forms, and colors.

**Aesthetics:** The quality or sensation of pleasure, enjoyment, disturbance, or meaning people can experience in viewing works of art.

**Architecture:** The art and science of designing buildings and other structures.

**Artwork:** Artifact or action that has been put forward by an artist or other person as something to be experienced, interpreted, and appreciated.

**Audience:** The people who view, read, listen to, watch, or otherwise experience something, such as visual or performing arts.

**Balance:** The way in which the elements in visual arts are arranged to create a feeling of equilibrium in an artwork. The three types of balance are symmetry, asymmetry, and radial.

**Color:** What is perceived when waves of light strike the retina. Color is an element of art.

**Community:** A group of people who live in the same area (such as a city, town, or neighborhood) and who often share something in common, such as having a particular interest, attitude, or goals or attending the same school.

**Composition:** The placement of forms, shapes, colors, and light and dark areas in a work of art to express the artist's idea.

**Constructed environment:** Human-made or modified spaces and places; art and design-related disciplines such as architecture, urban planning, interior design, game design, virtual environment, and landscape design shape the places in which people live, work, and play.

**Content:** The representations, messages, ideas, and/or feelings expressed in a work of art.

**Culture:** The customs, beliefs, arts, and way of life of a group of people.

**Cultural contexts:** Ideas, beliefs, values, norms, customs, traits, practices, and characteristics shared by individuals within a group that form the circumstances surrounding the creation, presentation, preservation, and response to art.

**Cultural traditions:** Pattern of practices and beliefs within a societal group.

**Drawing:** An artwork consisting of lines and shapes/forms sketched on paper with materials such as pencils, pens, chalk, or pastels.

**Elements of art:** Sensory components used to create and talk about works of art: line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space.

**Emphasis:** The importance given to certain objects or areas in an artwork. Color, texture, shape, and size can be used to create emphasis. Emphasis is a principle of design.

**Expressive properties:** Moods, feelings, or ideas evoked or suggested through the attributes, features, or qualities of an image or work of art.

**Figurative:** The representation of people, subjects, and scenes from everyday life.

**Focal point:** The place in a work of art at which attention becomes focused because of an element emphasized in some way.

**Form:** A three-dimensional object, such as a cube or a ball. Form is an element of art.

**Found object:** The use of man-made or natural objects not normally considered traditional art materials. Found objects are transformed by changing meaning from their original context. The objects can be used singly or in combination (e.g., assemblage or installation).

**Identity:** A sense of self, which can reflect one's internal qualities, such as personality, character, interests, emotions, and culture, and external qualities, such as physical characteristics and attire. Self-identity reflects a person's own identity, while group identity reflects the identity of more than one, such as a class or community.

**Image:** Visual representation of a person, animal, thing, idea, or concept.

**Installation art:** Art designed to exist in a site-specific location whether inside or outside, public or private. Contemporary art installation materials can range from everyday objects and natural materials to new and alternative media. Often the viewer walks into the installation space and is surrounded by the art.

**Line:** A mark on a surface. Lines can be created by a pen, pencil, brush, stick, etc., on a variety of surfaces. Line is an element of art.

**Materials:** Substances out of which art is made or composed, ranging from the traditional to "non-art" materials and virtual, cybernetic, and simulated materials.

**Media/Medium:** The materials and tools used by the artist to create a work of art.

**Mood:** The feeling created in a work of art.

**Mural:** A large artwork, usually a painting, that is created or placed on a wall or ceiling, often in a public place. A muralist creates murals.

**Painting:** An artwork created by using a brush or other tool to apply tempera, watercolor, oil, acrylic, etc., to a surface.

**Principles of design:** The guidelines artists use as they create artworks. The principles of design express how the elements of a visual object relate to each other and the developed work as a whole. Principles include balance, emphasis, movement, pattern, repetition, proportion, variety, contrast, rhythm, and unity.

**Realism:** Art style that depicts life in a lifelike way.

**Representational:** Depicting an object or person in a way that is very similar to the way the object or person actually appears.

**Sculpture:** A three-dimensional work of art, such as a statue.

**Space:** An empty surface or area. Also, the area surrounding something.

**Style:** The specific artistic character and trends in art movements, including the recognizable characteristics of art or design that are found consistently in historical periods, cultural traditions, schools of art, or works of an individual artist.

**Subject matter:** The persons or things represented in a work of art. In abstract and nonobjective forms of art, it refers to the basic character of all the visual signs the artist uses.

**Technique:** The manner and skill in which the artist uses tools and materials to achieve an expressive effect.

**Texture:** The way a surface looks and feels, such as smooth, rough, or bumpy. Texture is an element of art.

**Value:** The lightness or darkness of colors. Tints have a light value. Shades have a dark value. Value is an element of art.

#### **STANDARDS ADDRESSED: HISTORY SOCIAL SCIENCE:**

4.2 Students describe the social, political, cultural, and economic life and interactions among people of California from the pre-Columbian societies to the Spanish mission and Mexican rancho periods.

4.3 Students explain the economic, social, and political life in California from the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic through the Mexican-American War, the Gold Rush, and the granting of statehood.

4.4 Students explain how California became an agricultural and industrial power, tracing the transformation of the California economy and its political and cultural development since the 1850s.

5.1 Students describe the major pre-Columbian settlements, including the cliff dwellers and pueblo people of the desert Southwest, the American Indians of the Pacific Northwest, the nomadic nations of the Great Plains, and the woodland peoples east of the Mississippi River.

5.3 Students describe the cooperation and conflict that existed among the American Indians and between the Indian nations and the new settlers.

5.4 Students understand the political, religious, social, and economic institutions that evolved in the colonial era.

5.8 Students trace the colonization, immigration, and settlement patterns of the American people from 1789 to the mid-1800s, with emphasis on the role of economic incentives, effects of the physical and political geography, and transportation systems.

- 8.3 Students understand the foundation of the American political system and the ways in which citizens participate in it.
- 8.4 Students analyze the aspirations and ideals of the people of the new nation.
- 8.5 Students analyze U.S. foreign policy in the early Republic.
- 8.6 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced, with emphasis on the Northeast.
- 8.7 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the South from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced.
- 8.8 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the West from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced.
- 8.9 Students analyze the early and steady attempts to abolish slavery and to realize the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.
- 8.10 Students analyze the multiple causes, key events, and complex consequences of the Civil War.
- 8.11 Students analyze the character and lasting consequences of Reconstruction.
- 8.12 Students analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in the United States in response to the Industrial Revolution.
- 10.3 Students analyze the effects of the Industrial Revolution in England, France, Germany, Japan, and the United States.
- 10.5 Students analyze the causes and course of the First World War.
- 10.6 Students analyze the effects of the First World War.
- 11.1 Students analyze the significant events in the founding of the nation and its attempts to realize the philosophy of government described in the Declaration of Independence.
- 11.2 Students analyze the relationship among the rise of industrialization, large-scale rural-to-urban migration, and massive immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe.
- 11.3 Students analyze the role religion played in the founding of America, its lasting moral, social, and political impacts, and issues regarding religious liberty.
- 11.4 Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century.
- 11.5 Students analyze the major political, social, economic, technological, and cultural developments of the 1920s.
- 11.6 Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New Deal fundamentally changed the role of the federal government.

11.7 Students analyze America's participation in World War II.

11.8 Students analyze the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II America.

11.9 Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II.

11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.

11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

12.3 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are (i.e., the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations that are not part of government), their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.

12.8 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life.

12.10 Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: majority rule and individual rights; liberty and equality; state and national authority in a federal system; civil disobedience and the rule of law; freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial; the relationship of religion and government.

## **STANDARDS ADDRESSED: VISUAL ARTS**

1.1 Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed.

1.2 Artists and designers shape artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative artmaking goals.

2.1 Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and art-making approaches.

2.3 People create and interact with objects, places, and design, and this defines, shapes, enhances, and empowers their lives.

- Artists and designers develop excellence through practice and constructive critique to reflect on, revise, and refine work over time.
- Artists, curators, and others consider a variety of factors and methods including evolving technologies when preparing and refining artwork for display, and when deciding if and how to preserve and protect it.
- Objects, artifacts, and artworks collected, preserved, or presented either by artists, museums, or other venues communicate meaning and a record of social, cultural, and political experiences resulting in the cultivating of appreciation and understanding.

7.1 Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed through engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.

## 7.2 Visual imagery influences understanding of and responses to the world.

- People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.
- Through artmaking, people make meaning by investigating and developing awareness of perceptions, knowledge, and experiences.
- People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.