

The Contours of Creativity: Public Art, Cultural Landscapes, and Urban Space in Venice, California

Zia Salim
California State University, Fullerton

Abstract

This cross-sectional study examines spatial and thematic patterns of public art in Venice, Los Angeles's bohemian beach community, to determine how public wall art marks the cultural landscape. To do this, 353 items of public art were field surveyed, photographed, and mapped, with the resulting inventory being subjected to content analysis. Data from secondary sources, including the city's history and demographics, were used to contextualize the results. The results indicate that most public art is located on commercial buildings, with a smaller concentration on residential buildings. A majority of public art in Venice includes three main types of elements: local elements, people, and nature. Although public art is an especially dynamic and ephemeral subject of study, I conclude that an analysis of the locations and themes of public art helps to explain its aesthetic and historic functions and demonstrates its role in Venice's cultural landscape.

Keywords: cultural landscape, public art, street art, murals, Venice

Introduction

THE BEACH COMMUNITY of Venice is the eclectic epicenter of Los Angeles: for decades wanderers, non-conformers, hippies, and tourists have congregated in this seaside spot to partake in Venice's unconventional atmosphere and unique architecture. Images of the beach, the boardwalk, and the canals and their bungalows are predominant in popular imaginations of Venice's urban geography, while popular understandings of Venice's social geography consider its (counter)cultural dimensions as a haven for poets and performers, surfers and skaters, bodybuilders and bohemians, musicians and mystics, and spiritualists and free spirits. Taken together, these imagined attributes make Venice's boardwalk the second-most-visited destination in Southern California (Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation 2016) after Disneyland. Tourism, culture, entertainment, and art have been integral to Venice since its founding in 1905, and it is unsurprising that public art is a notable aspect of Venice's contemporary cultural landscape.

This article focuses on two-dimensional artwork that is applied to exterior walls that are on, or visible from, public streets. I analyze and contextualize public wall art to address two interconnected research questions: What is the spatiality of public art in Venice? What thematic elements do these public art works present? The larger goal of this project is to understand how and where public art marks the cultural landscape and creates a sense of place in Venice. As Schrank observes, a study of public art in the Los Angeles region is especially apt, given the city's historical connection to the visual image: "The relationship of art to place is pronounced in Los Angeles. A world center for the production and projection of visual culture, the city has a long history of investing in its own representational imagery for the purposes of civic promotion and regional boosterism" (2010, 435).

This study builds on empirical and theoretical considerations of art and public space. Scholarship has examined public art's place in the city, including analyses of how public art can relate to economic development and urban design (Roberts and Marsh 1995; Miles 1997; Hall and Robertson 2001; Robertson and Richards 2003; McCarthy 2006; Sharp 2007), and public art's political nature (Jarman 1996; Goalwin 2013; Rolston 2014). Scholars have also examined how art and place connect, with examinations of the various drivers and outcomes related to the intersection of public art and (individual and group) identity and collective culture (Marschall 2002; Sapega 2002; Amin 2008; Chang 2008; Chehabi and Christia 2008; Zebracki et al. 2010; Rolston 2011; Goalwin 2013; Rolston 2014; Schneller and Irizarry 2014; Hannum and Rhodes II 2018). This project also draws on research on public art in Southern California (Landres 2002; Corrigan and Polk 2014; Bloch 2016; Chakravarty and Chen 2016; Kayzar 2016; Salim 2017).

Public art can illustrate Lefebvre's spatial triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces (1991). Lefebvre conceived *representations of space* as the material spaces conceptualized by planners and urbanists. Artists creating public art, however, start with the city's material spaces and then reimagine them in their own ways. Lefebvre's idea of *representational space* reflects how imagination and ideals overlay physical space, and how space is appropriated by users. Public art, thus, is one way in which representational spaces are created in the city, and when public art makes a (subversive) claim on urban space, artists assert their right to the city. This follows Harvey's argument that the right to the city invokes "a right to change ourselves by changing the city. . . . [the] freedom to make and remake the city and ourselves" (2012, 315).

Public art is a meaningful subject of study for the careful observer of the urban landscape not only because it is public, but also due to its inherently dynamic, highly visible, symbolically rich, and potentially layered nature. In the case of Venice, it is also relatively widespread. The iconography of public art can reflect the identity and values of the artists and communities around them, much as a mirror would; as such, public art enables visualization and analysis of the topics that are significant in a particular place. In designing a study of the cultural landscape, it is clear that exterior walls tend to have higher levels of visibility and impact than interior ceilings and walls. For this reason, this article focuses on exterior walls; a study of other painted objects (e.g., utility boxes) and interiors is beyond the scope of this article. Similarly, while other forms of public art such as performance art or sculpture may contribute to an assessment of the cultural landscape, an analysis of the totality of public art in Venice is beyond the scope of this article. This project does not examine work that is primarily textual (e.g., a poem written on a wall), and also excludes some forms of commercial artwork (e.g., when art is used to promote a specific product, as in a billboard). Similarly, it excludes tagging and graffiti that is primarily textual, although these are also public and generally involve territoriality.

Methods

This article's principal data source is a series of field surveys conducted in January and February 2019 as part of a larger longitudinal study of murals in Los Angeles. The study area boundaries are those of the Venice neighborhood, as identified by the Venice Neighborhood Council and other municipal agencies. A total of 353 works of public art in the relatively compact Venice study area (3.17 square miles), were field surveyed, photographed, and mapped (Figure 1). This inventory of public art was analyzed in terms of spatial location and thematic elements.¹ To contextualize the primary data collection, a range of secondary data, including historical and archival data, previous mural surveys, and census data, was also examined. The field surveys were comprehensive and systematic, but should not be considered a definitive guide to every (painted) public artwork. Given the project's breadth, it is possible that a small number of artworks, mostly of smaller scale and/or in less visible locations, was unintentionally overlooked.

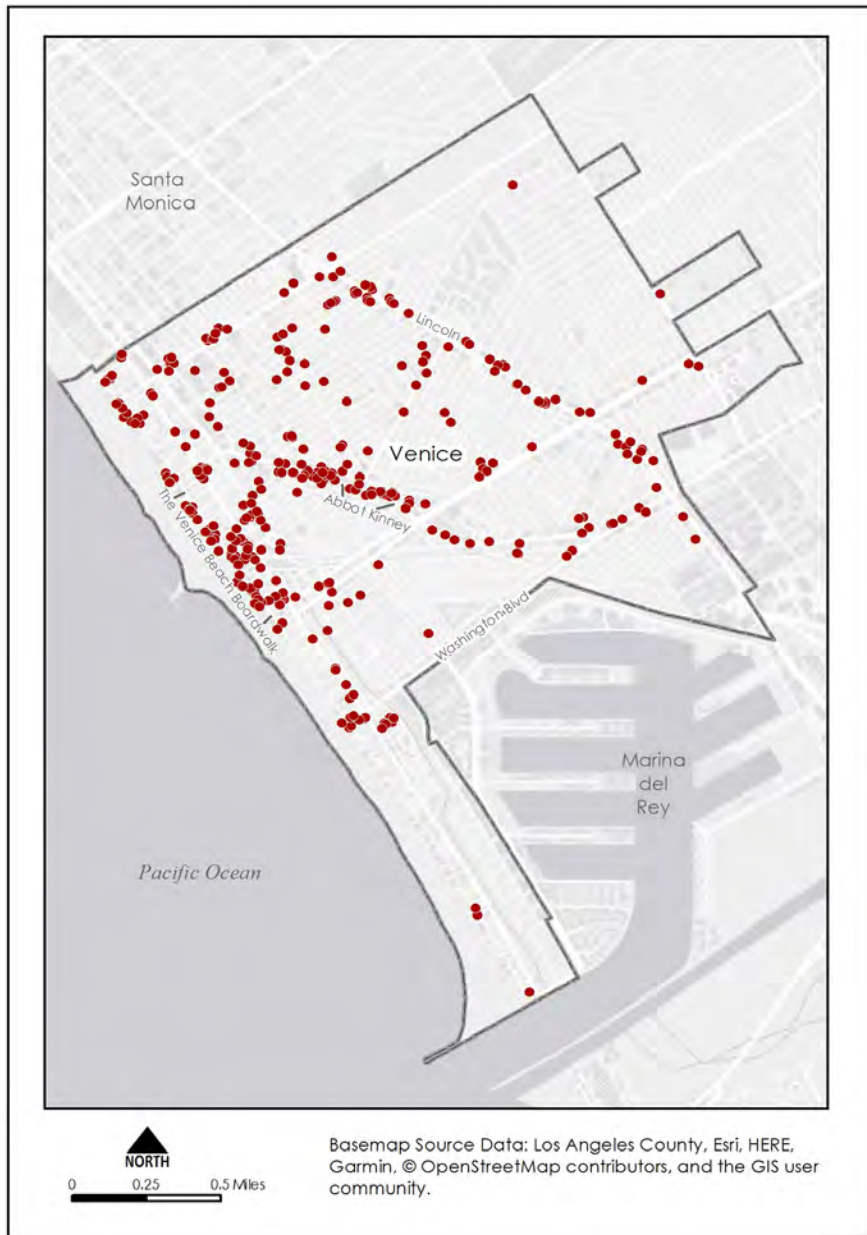


Figure 1.—Locations of public art in the Venice study area. Source: Author surveys. Cartography by Vanessa Engstrom.

Venice, California

Tobacco mogul-turned-real-estate-developer Abbott Kinney founded Venice in 1905 with the intent to create a resort and amusement park that would mimic Venice, Italy (down to the canals, gondolas, and arcaded architecture). Venice’s fortunes have waxed and waned over time: amusement parks flourished and failed, the original canals were filled in to make space for automobiles, Venice was annexed by Los Angeles in 1926, and oil was discovered in 1929, fueling a rapid boom and bust (Hanney 2005). The 1939 Homeowners Loan Corporation (HOLC) survey provides a snapshot of the three areas that make up present-day Venice. This data was used to assign two of the three areas the lowest possible rating; the third received the second-lowest possible rating (Appendix 1). In the post-war era, Venice’s counterculture (and cheap housing) attracted artists, beatniks, and hippies. In 1958, Orson Welles cast Venice as a Mexican border town in his film *Touch of Evil*, because it looked convincingly rundown and decayed (Sanchez 2011). Writing a year later, poet Lawrence Lipton described Venice as a “horizontal, jerry-built slum by the sea” (1959, 17); in the late 1960s, hundreds of decrepit buildings were demolished by the city (Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation 2016).² Skateboarding exploded in popularity in Venice and adjacent Santa Monica, partly due to the influence of surf culture; Venice is part of the famed “Dogtown” of the early 1970s. Venice’s location and relatively cheaper property values made it a target for gentrification starting in the 1980s and continuing in the 1990s and 2000s (Umemoto 2006). The latest wave of gentrification in Venice has accompanied the development of the Silicon Beach area on Los Angeles’s Westside, as the presence of technology companies and their workers has expanded in the area since the late 2000s. Technology company Snap (parent of Snapchat) was founded in Venice, and tech and media companies with a presence in Venice include Google, BuzzFeed, and Vice. The landscapes associated with wealth and gentrification in Venice stand in sharp contrast with the landscapes of encampments and RVs associated with the homeless and transient, groups who have long been a part of Venice’s scene. Understanding this context provides a framework for interpreting current conditions, from the importance of art, tourism, and entertainment, to Venice’s eclectic and individualistic identity, to how Venice has persisted as a series of neighborhoods, to how a rent gap has set up geographies of gentrification in Venice.

To contextualize the research results and highlight some of the differences between Venice and its surroundings (and, indeed, perceptions and realities in Venice), I now present some demographic data. In a very real sense, multiple Venices make up the larger “Venice” shown in Figure 1: despite its small

size, the Venice study area is a heterogeneous area that is comprised of several smaller neighborhoods characterized by great diversity in terms of their built environment and socioeconomic characteristics. Some salient demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1. Compared to Los Angeles County, Venice has a larger white population, a smaller foreign-born population, and a slightly older population. Given that many of its residential areas were built prior to the mass usage of the automobile, Venice's streets tend to be small and the building density is high, particularly in the western half. Venice's population density, at about 11,295 people/mi², is higher than that of Los Angeles City and County (7,852 and 2,127 people/mi², respectively).

Table 1. Comparison of Selected Demographic Characteristics

	Venice Study Area		Los Angeles County	
		Percent		Percent
Total Population	35,806	—	10,105,722	—
Latino/Hispanic of any race	5,815	16.2%	4,893,579	48.4%
White	25,036	69.9%	2,676,982	26.5%
Black/African-American	2,272	6.3%	799,579	7.9%
Asian	1,385	3.9%	1,442,577	14.3%
Foreign born	7,215	20.2%	3,478,879	34.4%

Source: 2013–2017 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Tables DP-05, B05002, S0501

The area's housing stock includes a much larger proportion of renter-occupied units than the county, and families make up a smaller proportion of households compared to the county. Relative to the county, the area's economic indicators are fairly robust, with a lower percentage of residents below the poverty line and a higher median household income; the proportion of households making \$150,000 and above is double that of Los Angeles County. This is likely connected to levels of formal education, as both high school graduation rates and the proportion of college graduates in Venice exceed comparative rates in the county as a whole. Selected socioeconomic and housing characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Selected Socioeconomic and Housing Characteristics

	Venice Study Area		Los Angeles County	
		Percent		Percent
Owner-occupied housing units	6,409	34.9%	1,512,364	46.0%
Renter-occupied housing units	11,931	65.1%	1,782,834	54.0%
Family households	7,036	38.4%	2,203,922	66.9%
Non-family households	11,304	61.6%	1,091,276	33.1%
Households earning \$150,000 and above	5,942	32.4%	501,413	15.2%
Median household income	\$94,636 ³	--	\$61,015	--
All people, below poverty line	3,802	10.6%	1,688,505	17.0%
High school degree or higher, adults over 25 years	27,695	94.5% ⁴	5,316,091	78.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher, adults over 25 years	18,764	64.0%	2,117,730	32.0%

Source: 2013–2017 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Tables DP-03, DP-04, DP-05, S1101, S1501.

As the census data indicate, Venice and Los Angeles County differ in many ways. The data also serve as a reminder not to conflate one part of Venice (e.g. the boardwalk) with the whole. And while it is true that Venice's unique landscape and distinctive, individualistic identity stand in contrast to Los Angeles (Schmidt-Brümmer 1972), the summarized data subsumes internal heterogeneity, as there are wide variations across the neighborhoods that comprise Venice. Understanding historical trajectories and current demographics helps explain the many contradictions of contemporary Venice: a place that is simultaneously energetic and easygoing, material and spiritual, exhausting and exhilarating.

The Urban Geography of Public Art in Venice: Locations and Spaces

An analysis of the locations of public art (Figure 1) highlights some interesting aspects of the relationship between public art and urban public space, as I explain next. The locational patterns of the public artworks identified above reveal that the most prominent (and well-known) concentration of public art is along and near Venice's famous boardwalk, adjacent to Venice Beach. According to Los Angeles's Department of Parks and Recreation (2016), the boardwalk and its adjoining recreational properties are the busiest facility operated by the department across all of Los Angeles, drawing about 28,000 to 30,000 visitors per day and an average of over 10 million visitors per year. Public art on the boardwalk is complemented by public art located on commercial and residential buildings on the first and second streets paralleling the boardwalk, and it is accompanied by a smaller number of commercial advertisements that mimic public art.

Other concentrations of public art are found on and/or along main commercial thoroughfares such as Abbot Kinney Boulevard, Lincoln Boulevard, and Washington Boulevard. These locations are suitable for public art, due to the availability of blank walls at intersections with smaller streets and alleys, and the availability of wall space, both on business façades (and, to a relatively smaller degree, in the alleys that parallel larger streets. Traffic volume along these commercial thoroughfares offers high levels of exposure for public art. Pedestrian-friendly Abbott Kinney Boulevard, in particular, approaches the boardwalk in terms of sheer volume of public art. This density is likely due to Abbott Kinney's urban design (both in terms of walkability and wall availability), the high density of particular types of (high-end) businesses, and the presence and characteristics of a potential audience.

The remaining public artworks are spread throughout Venice on residential and what I refer to as "public serving" buildings. Most public art in residential areas is located on flat surfaces on fences at the front and rear of homes, on garage doors in alleys behind homes, and along the sides of homes when the side is exposed to a public street or alley. The "public serving" category denotes buildings associated with public and nonprofit groups, including churches, schools, community centers, libraries, parks, and community gardens. The presence of public art on these types of facilities (most often schools and community centers) is unsurprising, given the potential availability of wall space, funding, and audience.

In addition to their spatial locations, public art in Venice can also be assessed with respect to the various types of land uses with which they are associated, as indicated in Table 3. The importance of commercial spaces for public art is indicated by Table 3, as just over sixty percent of the public artworks that are the subject of this study are located in commercial areas. This underscores the significant role that commercial property owners play, vis-à-vis public art and the shaping of Venice's cultural landscape, as they commission artwork or allow artwork to be created on their buildings.

Table 3. Land Uses Associated with Public Art in Venice Study Area

Land Use Type	Number of Public Artworks	Percent of Total
Commercial	213	60.3%
Residential	105	29.7%
Public-serving	35	9.9%
TOTAL	353	100.0%

Source: Author surveys, 2019

Some (but not all) of the art in commercial areas is commercial in nature, as described below. Furthermore, some of the public art in commercial areas supports place branding and place creation strategies. This is different from the (bottom-up) community art found elsewhere in Los Angeles (Landres 2002, Salim 2017); community-initiated public art is relatively less prevalent in Venice. Just under thirty percent of the public art surveyed is found in residential areas, although this art is spread across Venice and is not particularly localized. It is worth noting that none of the public artwork surveyed is on larger-scale housing developments, and only a few are on apartment buildings.

A summary analysis of the 353 public artworks identified in the field surveys indicates that there is no "typical" form of two-dimensional public art in Venice: there are wide variations in terms of size, complexity, location, purpose, materials used, level of official sanction, and level of formal artist training. Early scholarship describes the complexity of the mural landscape as a limitation to analyzing it: "there are too many [murals] . . . depicting numerous ideas and themes, painted in literally hundreds of different places, to allow us to form sophisticated conclusions about the reasons for their existence" (Holscher 1976, 25). I contend, however, that an examination of public art in Venice, while undoubtedly involving a degree of generalization, can reveal groups of elements; the content and relative size of these groups of elements is meaningful. This relates to Ash Amin's concept of *symbolic projection*: "It is in public space that the currents and moods of public culture

are frequently formed and given symbolic expression. The iconography of public space... can be read as a powerful symbolic and sensory code of public culture” (2008, 13). An analysis of the themes presented in public art can further develop an understanding of the city, particularly in places that have not been studied in much depth. While text-based approaches to examining landscape may have some limitations, they can provide important data and can contribute to other types of landscape analysis in understudied areas.

Most public art in Venice includes elements that fall within specific categories, as discussed below. Some artwork includes only one type of element, while other artwork combines multiple types of elements; the categories below are not mutually exclusive. In the following sections, I describe the most prevalent elements in public art and provide illustrative examples.

The Cultural Landscapes of Public Art in Venice: Elements and Themes

Element 1: Place-Based

The first main category of elements in public art in Venice invokes a connection to place. Four subcategories reflect this: local landmarks and scenes, local environments, local history and people, and scenes from Venice, Italy. Just under thirty percent of the public art surveyed in Venice (103 artworks) included elements from at least one of these four place-based subcategories.

Representations of local landmarks and scenes are quite visible, and include scenes of Venice’s canals, signs, and buildings. Local environments are seen in art that depicts palm trees, beaches, and ocean scenes. Local history and people are seen in images from Venice’s past, including images of Venice founder Abbot Kinney, people connected with Venice (described in further detail below), as well as more recent events, such as the filming of specific movies. Examples of scenes from Venice, Italy, are infrequent, but include Venetian canals, bridges, and masks. Some public art makes textual connections to place through the inclusion of toponyms (e.g., “Venice,” “Muscle Beach”). In several subtle cases, an image obliquely connects to a place (such as images of roses on Rose Avenue). As the use of local elements anchors art to the local context, public art in Venice creates a distinctive sense of place. The integration of local elements in public art has been described in other contexts, such as Arreola’s analysis of Mexican-American murals (1984). However, Venice is unique in that local or place-based elements are present in a relatively large percentage of public art. Examples of public artwork that features this first category of elements are shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4.



Figure 2.—Place-Based: Local Landmarks. This adaptation of Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* features Venice landmarks, including the Venice sign, the boardwalk, the *Ballerina Clown* sculpture, and references to weightlifting, surfing, the drum circle, skating, music, performance artists, and more. Venice Kinesis, Rip Cronk, 2010. Photograph by author.



Detail 1



Detail 2

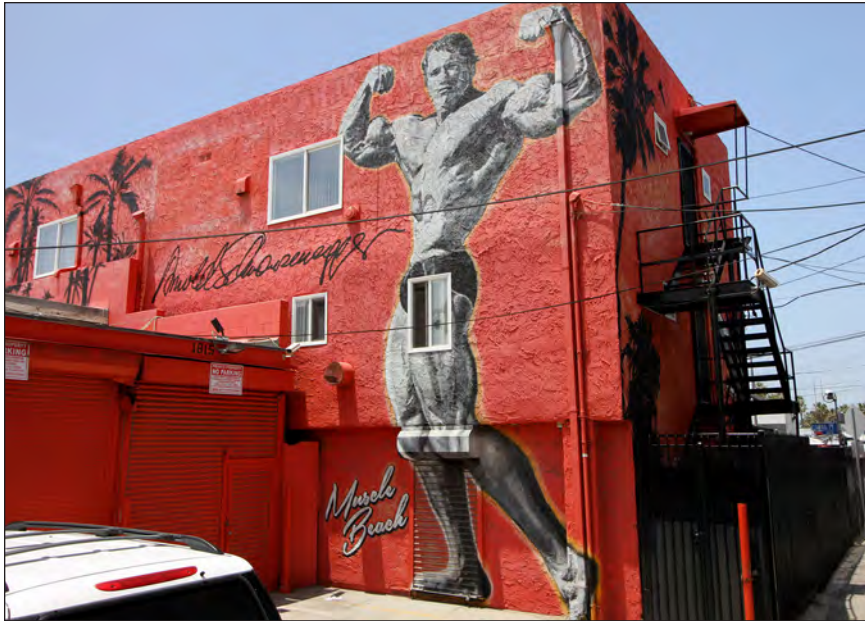


Figure 3.—Place-Based: Local History and People. Arnold Schwarzenegger's first years in the U.S. were spent in Venice. He worked out at Gold's Gym on Venice's Pacific Avenue and trained at the weightlifting platform on the boardwalk's Muscle Beach (referred to in text at the bottom of the mural). Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jonas Never, 2013. Photograph by author.



Figure 4.—Place-Based: Local Landmarks. This art, on garage doors in a residential neighborhood, is as much a tribute to the dogs as it is to the Venice canals (left door) and the Venice sign (right door). Title unknown, Gustavo Zermeño, Jr., 2016 and 2018. Photograph by author.

Element 2: People

The second-most common category of elements in public art in Venice is that of people, with just over twenty-seven percent of public artworks (ninety-six artworks) including an image from one of three “people”-related subcategories: individuals, prominent people, and human figures. The largest subtheme is that of individuals, in depictions of real and imagined people that range from serious to whimsical. The second-largest subtheme is that of celebrities and prominent people associated with Venice. These include links with local history (including figures such as Abbot Kinney and images of people at the amusement parks in the 1920s) as well as modern celebrities with connections to Venice. Examples of the latter include Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Red Hot Chili Peppers (in a mural on the building on which they conducted a rooftop concert in 2011), Jim Morrison of The Doors, Teena Marie, Dennis Hopper, and Ronda Rousey (all of whom lived in Venice). On Windward Avenue, a small mural of Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson recalls their collaboration in *White Men Can't Jump* (1992); this mural is diagonally across from an expansive four-story mural that depicts Charlton Heston and Janet Leigh in the opening scene from Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil* (1958). Both films were shot in Venice. Finally, a smaller subtheme is that of human figures, typically in more abstract forms. Examples of public artwork that features this category of elements are presented in Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8.



Figure 5.—This artwork graces an automotive repair shop on Lincoln Blvd. Title unknown, Sonata, 2012. Photograph by author.



Figure 6.—People. The artwork on the left is the product of a collaboration between New York-based Bisco Smith and South African-born Ralph Ziman (*Africa_47*). This is one portion of a (partially inaccessible) larger wall. *Worlds Collide*, Bisco Smith and Ralph Ziman, 2015. The artwork on the right is by Ralph Ziman, who now lives in Los Angeles and maintains a studio in Venice. *The Greatest (Ali Boomaye)*, Ralph Ziman, 2016. Photograph by author.



Figure 7.—People. This mural, on the California headquarters of *The Paradise Project*, an organization dedicated to pantheism, features prominent individuals aligned with pantheism. These include Albert Einstein, Baruch Spinoza, Carl Jung, Carl Sagan, Emily Dickinson, Nikola Tesla, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ralph Waldo Emerson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Henry David Thoreau, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Rumi, and Lao Tzu. *Luminaries of Pantheism*, Levi Ponce (main mural) and Matt Dean (smaller portion of mural on right), 2015. Photograph by author.



Figure 8.—People. This mural, just off of Abbott Kinney Boulevard, is by Israeli artist Pilpeled. Title unknown, Pilpeled, 2019. Photograph by author.

Element 3: Nature

The third-most prevalent category of elements in public art in Venice is that of nature, with just over twenty-seven percent of public artworks (ninety-six artworks) including imagery from one of two subcategories: animals and insects, and flowers and trees. Public art that includes these elements creates a specific, natural aesthetic that stands in contrast to the urban form on which it is presented. The subcategory of “animals and insects” includes images of dragons, dogs, bears, birds, wolves, elephants, and a variety of insects, including ladybugs, butterflies, and bees. Within the “flowers and trees” subcategory, palm trees are dominant (in an overlap with the place-based category), although roses are also noticeable, as mentioned above. Examples of public artwork that represent this third category of elements are shown in Figures 9, 10, and 11.



Figure 9.—Nature: Animals and Insects. This mural of three maned wolves was created in conjunction with *Carbon*, an art exhibit by Canadian-born, Brooklyn-based artist Li Hill. The exhibit depicts monochromatic portraits of animals whose habitats are affected by climate change. *Maned Wolves*, Li Hill, 2015. Photograph by author.



Figure 10.—Nature: Animals and Insects. This mural by Atlanta-based artist Greg Mike juxtaposes a bear with his trademark brightly colored “loudmouf” characters. *Bear Witness*, Greg Mike, 2017. Photograph by author.



Figure 11.—Nature: Animals and Insects. Jules Muck’s memorial to her Chihuahua, Tula, covers the entire side of a house. Title unknown, Jules Muck, 2014. Photograph by author.

Other Elements and Themes

Although much of the public art in Venice includes elements from one or more of the categories described above, the area’s public art examines a wide variety of topics and may include elements not described here. The inherent diversity of public art means that it cannot be tidily summed up as being part of a limited number of discrete categories or presenting one of a list of specific elements. Other types of public art that are relatively common in Venice include abstract and commercial art. Artworks that were largely abstract comprised thirteen percent of the public art surveyed (forty-six artworks), while art that was (directly or indirectly) connected to a commercial purpose made up just under ten percent of the public art surveyed (thirty-four artworks). The latter illustrates the blurring of distinctions between art and marketing in street art, as reported by Droney (2010). Figures 12, 13, and 14 provide examples of these less common types of public art.

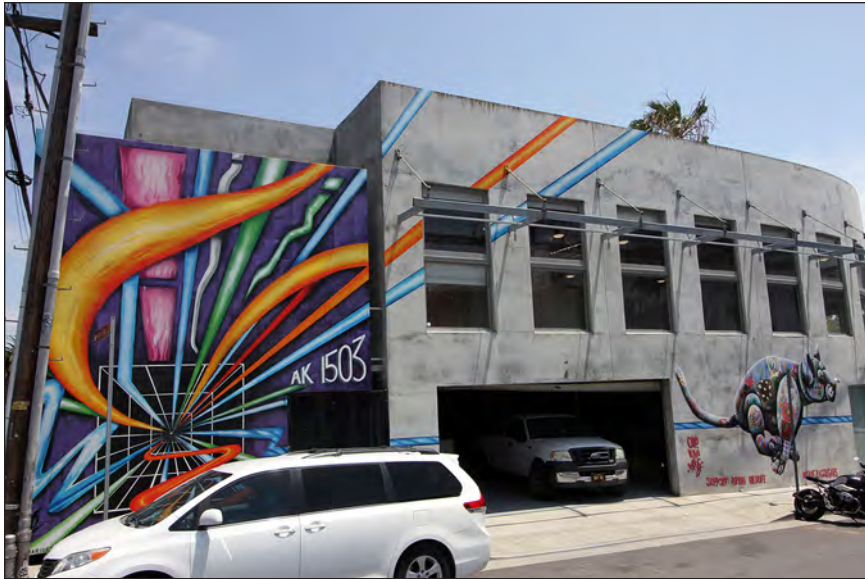


Figure 12.—Abstract. Bands of color extend away from the piece on the left by Marioetheartist. The artwork on the right, painted as part of a multiple-city mural painting tour by UK artist Louis Masai, focuses on the extinction crisis. Title unknown, Marioetheartist, 2018. Photograph by author.



Figure 13.—Commercial. Artwork by BumblebeeLovesYou combines the artist's signature series about childhood with subtle references to the Dunkin Donuts business whose parking lot it adorns. Dunkin Donuts, BumblebeeLovesYou, 2015. Photograph by author.



Figure 14.—Commercial. This artwork by artist Hans Walor appears on the side of a marijuana dispensary. Green Goddess, Hans Walor, 2015. Photograph by author.

Artists

A diverse group of artists creates public art in Venice. A core of prolific and talented artists, who have created multiple artworks over a long time period, have come to be extremely significant in marking Venice's cultural landscape. Rip Cronk has created influential public art in and near the boardwalk since 1989. Jules Muck's work is widely visible across Venice, from the boardwalk zone to commercial corridors to residential space, and along main thoroughfares, on homes, and in alleys. Jonas Never, who has worked across the Los Angeles region, has created art in many prominent locations in Venice. Work by local artists including Isabelle Alford-Roja, Marioe, and Gustavo Zermeño, Jr. is also visible across Venice. These types of local connections help explain the prevalence of place-based elements in Venice's public art.

Interestingly, a smaller body of work, primarily found on and near Abbot Kinney Boulevard, has been created by prominent artists from beyond the region (including Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, Puerto Rico, the UK, Germany, Israel, and Australia). This illustrates how public art in a local site can connect to regional, national, and even transnational circuits of creative practice and highlights Venice's regional standing as a prime location for public art.

Temporality

Public art is inherently impermanent. Although the longevity of the public art that has persisted in Venice for decades provides important clues to its relevance within larger social contexts, public art is particularly dynamic and ephemeral. As a cross-sectional study, the analysis presented here is a snapshot in time. New public art is constantly being created; public art that is physically present may be obscured by temporary walls, construction fencing, or other obstructions; and (mirroring rapid transformations in the dynamic urban landscape) public art is constantly threatened by tagging⁵, vandalism, changing building ownership, demolition, new construction, and weathering.⁶ The long-term preservation and persistence of public art in Venice is worth noting, given the age of some of the artwork. Several older and more prominent murals have been restored over time. For example, Emily Winters' *The People Against the Developers* (1975), part of which is shown in Figure 15, was restored by the artist in 1997 and again by the artist and Nathan Zakheim Associates in 2007; Rip Cronk's *Venice Reconstituted* (1989) was restored by the artist in 2010 and renamed *Venice Kinesis* (Figure 2); and Peter Stewart's *You Are Not Forgotten* (1992), a POW/MIA memorial, was vandalized in 2016 and restored a year later. These types of restorations are limited to larger, more notable works of public art, as restoration of this nature typically requires a public or private sponsor. Funding public art restoration brings together public, nonprofit, and private sponsors; restoration efforts indicate the relevance and significance of the original art, and the interest of sponsors and the community in the maintenance of public art.

My review of two mural surveys conducted in the Venice area by Dunitz in 1993 and 1998 indicates that fourteen of the forty murals documented in 1993 were no longer present five years later—a loss of about thirty-five percent. In comparison, two new murals were created in Venice in the same time period.⁷ Of twenty-five exterior murals documented by Dunitz in 1998, six (almost twenty-four percent) were no longer present in 2019. In some cases, the buildings or walls themselves have been destroyed, while the murals have been painted over in others. Public art's ephemerality is noteworthy, even if not unique to Venice.⁸

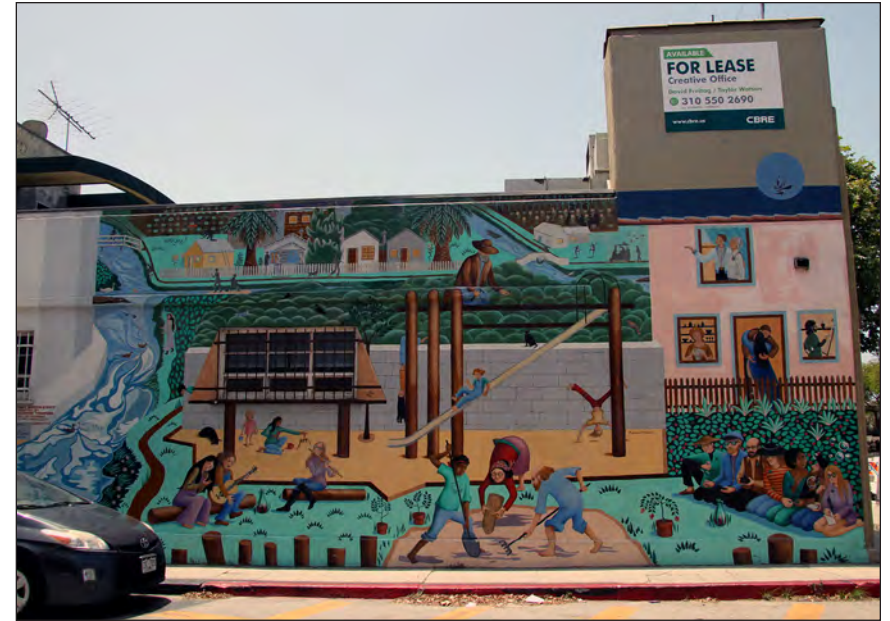


Figure 15.—*Temporality*. This is a portion of a larger mural that depicts bulldozers and machinery tearing down a home with someone in it, migratory birds, and community scenes in the Venice canals (top). The individuals depicted in the mural were actual residents at the time of painting. This mural has been painted out and restored several times. Note that the sign in the upper right indicates that the property was available for a “creative office” lease at the time that the photograph was taken, a reflection of the continued importance of the creative economy. A discussion of this mural in Davidson (2007) illustrates the author’s arguments about civic protests of modernist development in Los Angeles. *The People of Venice vs. the Developers*, Emily Winters, 1975. Photograph by author.

Discussion and Conclusion

An analysis of the intersection of creative practice and urban space, based on the results presented above, draws out at least five important points for discussion and consideration.

First, public art in the study area occupies a range of spaces: in many cases, public art is at eye level, while in other cases it is above or below it. In some instances, art is on a building directly along a street or sidewalk edge, while in others, art is visible from the street but is set back from it. In some areas, pedestrian traffic dominates (e.g., on near the Venice Beach boardwalk and Abbot Kinney Boulevard), while vehicular traffic is more prominent in other areas (e.g., along Lincoln Boulevard), and relatively little traffic of any kind is received in settings such as alleyways or peripheral residential streets. In

several locations, public art that is physically present has been obstructed and thus is not visible (and not included in this study). As a whole, I refer to this concept of differentiated visibility as a *continuum of visibility*: public art varies in the degree to which it is visible. Considering the continuum of visibility is important when assessing public art's functions or its impacts.

Second, when interpreting sense of place and the cultural landscape, it is important to consider the most prevalent themes and the functions that they might serve. Beyond its important role as an avenue for creativity and self-expression, public art in Venice serves place-based socialization and aesthetic functions. As in other locations where a local element is prominent, the neighborhood is simultaneously the subject and object of public art (Avila 2014). Examining the symbolic dimensions of public art in Venice reveals that the most prominent theme is that of place-specific elements such as local landmarks and scenes, local environments, local history, and scenes from Venice, Italy. These types of elements can contribute to the development of a sense of place and a distinctive, place-based identity, as geographers have long asserted: "awareness of the past is an important element in the love of place.... [H]istory is made visible by monuments in the landscape" (Tuan 1974, 99). The second-most prominent theme, that of people, partially overlaps the local/history theme described above. It also includes people with connections to Venice, and presumably may include members of the contemporary community. The "people" theme can serve several functions: it can act to humanize urban space, it can serve as a public memorial, and it can link to local history. The third-most prominent theme, nature, can serve to beautify urban space. The urban environment is softened by an integration of (symbolic) nature; the presence of trees, flowers, animals, and insects in the cultural landscape is particularly relevant, given that Venice's coastal location already imbues it with a degree of nature.

Interestingly, several themes were *not* seen in the field surveys. One of these was references to the city of Los Angeles. Despite the fact that Venice is politically part of the city, only three artworks out of the 353 surveyed connected Venice to its larger city and urban region: two depicted Los Angeles Chargers and Rams football players, and one urged the conservation of Los Angeles's cougars. The notion that public art foregrounds certain identities (Venice) while backgrounding others (Los Angeles) is noteworthy; this finding supports earlier assessments of how Venice's unique landscape and individualistic identity actively work to set it apart from Los Angeles (Schmidt-Brümmer 1972).

Furthermore, despite the fact that Venice has experienced challenges related to homelessness, development, and gentrification, the surveys did not reveal much public art that addresses these types of urban issues. These types of themes may have been lost over time, or were not produced in the first place.

Third, beyond reading public art for symbolic themes and elements (as one would read a text), analyzing the *geography* of public art at the city and street scale can help us better understand art and the city. For example, the high density of public art is worth noting. I argue that an awareness of urban history and culture provides some important clues to these patterns: Venice's built environment includes the boardwalk, alleyways, and commercial corridors (all suitable sites for public art); it is relatively dense due to its development prior to the mass adoption of the automobile; culture and creativity have historically been associated with Venice; and the community has a long-standing reputation for supporting self-expression and being a haven for artists, poets, musicians, and writers. The tourism that has been a cornerstone of Venice's economy may play a part: tourists are a potential audience for artists, and public art is another attraction for tourists. In Venice, geography and history combine to create an environment where art can be inscribed in the landscape.

Another noteworthy point about the geography of public art is that while over sixty percent of the public art surveyed was located in commercial areas, a disproportionately small percentage of it (just over nine percent) was overtly commercial. Commercial space, in the case of Venice, does not always produce commercial public art. Furthermore, a relatively high proportion of public art is found in residential spaces. These location patterns indicate the interest of both commercial and residential property owners in public art; they relate to Venice's history as a place that values and attracts creativity, and they reflect current efforts by civic boosters to use public art for urban branding and promotion.

Another way in which a geographic perspective can contribute to understandings of public art relates to the urban landscape. Public art is created in relation to the context of the urban landscape (e.g., the building or wall's size, location, and orientation), and the landscape's context may influence how viewers see and respond to the artwork. This is related to the aforementioned "continuum of visibility." Different scales and levels of visibility can evoke different responses: a five-story mural can inspire a sense of awe, while a small artwork can create a more intimate response (Figures 16 and 17). Furthermore, some public art in Venice actively responds to the urban



Figure 16.—Scale/Visibility. This five-story (50 feet tall, 20 feet wide) mural of the founder of Venice gazes in the direction of his original canal district. Abbott Kinney, Rip Cronk, 2004. Photograph by author.



Figure 17.—Scale/Visibility. This small image (2.5 feet tall, 2 feet wide) of a dog observes a busy street in a residential neighborhood. Title, artist, and date unknown. Photograph by author.

context: Noah Abrams’s photorealistic mural of palm trees, when viewed at a certain angle, includes an actual palm tree on the adjacent street (Figure 18). This reflects how, as noted by Burham (2010), public art can work in tandem with the city.



Figure 18.—Urban Context. A photorealistic depiction of palm trees, this is the second of two similar pieces in the same space since 2016. Daily Palm, Noah Abrams, 2018. Photograph by author.

A simultaneous consideration of public art’s spatial and thematic dimensions enables a more critical perspective that considers local heterogeneity to assess *what* public art is located *where*. For example, consider the cluster of art on Abbot Kinney Boulevard (Figure 1). The urban redevelopment of Abbot Kinney Boulevard (named West Washington Boulevard prior to 1989) has been accompanied by (and created) new construction, place branding, and conspicuous consumption. The public art that exists here emphasizes aesthetic and commercial dimensions, and (in 2019, at least) makes no mention of the gentrification that has occurred in the nearby Oaktown community (Deener 2007). This area illustrates how public art can be utilized to further the aims of civic boosters.

However, art that deals with social issues is not completely absent on Abbot Kinney Boulevard: a small piece shows Venice founder Abbot Kinney panhandling with a sign that reads “Need money for rent,” and an image

of a Native American figure includes the quote: “When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten, and the last stream poisoned, you will realize that you cannot eat money” (Figures 19 and 20). While these artists are staking a claim to the city and addressing provocative urban questions (Pinder 2008; Harvey 2012, 315) in ways that are striking, given the conspicuous consumption and boutique stores that surround their artworks, these messages are exceptions on Abbot Kinney Boulevard. Thus, a consideration of the spatiothematic dimensions of public art, in a way that includes the local social and historical context, can highlight public art’s functions by analyzing what the larger body of public art *does*, but also what it *does not* do.



Figure 19.—Social Issues. This image of Abbott Kinney panhandling, on the street that is named after him, in the place that he founded, comments on the recent changes that Venice has experienced. Title unknown, Gustavo Zermeño, Jr., 2018. Photograph by author.

Fourth, one should consider the artists who mark the cultural landscape and who exercise their agency by remaking the city (Harvey 2012, 315). In many cases, they live or work in Venice. The predominance of local themes, then, is not so surprising. But local artists are not restricted to local themes: for example, despite Jules Muck being a resident of Venice, a large portion of her body of work does not have an explicitly local theme. The public art created by these artists does, however, reflect Venice’s creative and individualistic spirit. Furthermore, the field surveys revealed the widespread inclusion of references to social media (such as Instagram or Twitter handles) on public



Figure 20.—Social Issues. Local small-business owner Kim Michalowski commissioned Native American artist Lehi Thunder Voice Eagle Sanchez to create this small but interesting piece in the wake of the events at Standing Rock. The artwork protests the Dakota Access Pipeline and includes an image of oil wells in the headdress and a snake entitled “oil pipe” encircling the main figure. The message is especially relevant considering that Venice was the site of an oil boom (and bust) in the 1930s. Protect the Sacred, Lehi Thunder Voice Eagle Sanchez, 2016. Photograph by author.

art, which enables interactions between viewers, public art, and artists in ways that were previously impossible: an individual who views public art on the street can then extend his or her engagement with the art and artist across time and space. Finally, in cases where artists do not have preexisting ties to Venice, the public art they create contributes to the development of local and extra-local connections.

Fifth, temporality is a hallmark of public art, both due to its dynamism and its ephemerality. Riggle (2010) argues that a “commitment to ephemerality” is implicit in street art: by “using the street, artists willingly subject their work to all of its many threats—it might be stolen, defaced, destroyed, moved, altered, or appropriated” (2010, 245). Temporality is not necessarily negative, as Bengtson (2014) asserts that the unexpectedness and ephemerality inherent in street art can pull viewers out of their everyday routines and make them more aware of their surroundings. The ephemerality of public art is not absolute, as portions of an artwork may decay over time and new layers may be added. Furthermore, when public art is “lost,” it is often replaced by another work in the same location. “Recycling” walls is logical, given that the supply of desirable spaces is finite. A final point about temporality is related to diurnal cycles: some public art, painted on the roll-up doors of the shops along the boardwalk, is invisible until the businesses are closed.⁹

Another point about ephemerality that is worth noting is the relatively limited amount of tagging and vandalism in the 353 works of public art that were surveyed. The little public art that has been damaged (as seen in Figure 21, for example) is instantly apparent because of the relative rarity of this occurrence.¹⁰ The relatively good condition of public art is notable, and I contend that this may be due to the relevance of the themes presented and/or some level of respect for public art. Furthermore, Venice Beach’s famous Public Art Walls, designed to give individuals a legitimized and sanctioned space for artistic self-expression and graffiti, may have reduced negative impacts on public art within Venice itself.

The observations made in Venice indicate many ways in which public art marks the cultural landscape and creates a specific sense of place. But it is too simplistic to argue that public art *always* beautifies the landscape, *always* creates a sense of place, and *always* expresses and shapes identity. While I agree that public art can create representational space (Lefebvre 1991), I maintain that a broader perspective is needed, one that critically assesses what and where public art contributes to the cultural landscape, what identities it expresses and how, who it serves and how, and how and



Figure 21.—Ephemerality. Damaged mural, artist and date unknown. Photograph by author.

why it creates (or does not create) a sense of place and identity. In this, I support the argument made by Zebracki, Van Der Vaart, and Van Aalst (2010) that the sociospatial settings of public art affect the core claims that it can make. For example, different pieces of public art occur in different urban locations, in different kinds of spaces, and have differential locations on the continuum of visibility. For these reasons, all public art is not equal in its ability to create a sense of place, evoke a shared identity, or mark the cultural landscape. Another example of the need for a careful consideration of public art relates to the idea of multiple publics: while Venice Beach and boardwalk, the Venice canals, and the Venice sign are some of the most “Instagrammable” places in Venice, public art on and near the boardwalk and Abbot Kinney Boulevard has become a popular backdrop for selfies and photographs, which are circulated on social media (Figures 22 and 23). : Thus, it is important to consider multiple publics (e.g., residents, tourists) when assessing how (and why) audiences relate to public art in the ways that they do.

This project has some methodological limitations in terms of study area and subjects. It was necessary to delineate study-area boundaries to define the scope of this project. The (somewhat arbitrary) political boundaries of the Venice neighborhood correspond well, but not perfectly, with population and/or public art concentrations; there are, obviously examples of



Figure 22.—Multiple Publics. Taking photographs with public art. Photograph by author.



Figure 23.—Multiple Publics. These wings cover almost the entire height of a two-story building. They are part of a larger series of wings that artist Kelsey Montague has been creating since 2014, which are designed for viewers to interact with. What Lifts You, Kelsey Montague, 2017. Photograph by author.

public art just outside the study area boundaries.¹¹ Furthermore, it was necessary to delimit the study subject. There are many forms of public art in Venice, but not all of them could be included in this study. Thus, in this project I examine painted art on a wall but exclude painted art on a utility box adjacent to that wall. Similarly, some public art (e.g., graffiti or aerosol art) blurs boundaries and cannot be easily categorized. A small number of graffiti works were included in this inventory of public art if they depicted a specific, non-textual object (e.g., an image of a person); graffiti that did not meet this criteria was not. Thus, while the density of public art in Venice is high compared to other parts of Los Angeles, parts of Venice's public art ecosystem are not addressed in this study.

Future research on public art in Venice could broaden the examination to consider public art as process. This could be done by focusing on the various artists and mechanisms that produce public art. In a similar vein, the role of the Social and Public Arts Resource Center (SPARC), a regional arts nonprofit based in Venice, in supporting public art (in Venice and beyond) could be considered in future studies. Finally, social media's intersection with public art has created new avenues for engagement that are worth exploring.

This article has examined the spatial configurations and thematic patterns of public art in Venice to elucidate how it marks the cultural landscape and creates a sense of place. The cultural landscape of public art relates to the places and spaces where it exists, the artists who produce it, and the public art's temporality. This article contributes to a growing literature on cultural dimensions of urbanization, it responds to calls for geographers to examine the work that public art does (Hannum and Rhodes II 2018), and it presents a framework for studying public art that may be applied to research on public art in other contexts.

Venice is an edgy place on Los Angeles's edge. Public art in Venice uniquely represents the community within which it is situated; like a window, it can provide a glimpse into ideas and subjects that are important to artists and the wider community. Similarly, it can create particular landscapes that (re)produce individual and group identity. As it addresses specific themes and integrates specific elements, as it serves particular functions with respect to aesthetics and identity, and as it strikingly creates a particular and local sense of place in a striking way, Venice's public art makes vital contributions to the cultural landscape. The results presented here are specific to Venice, but the underlying processes and outcomes are not; these findings can be compared to the results of similar analyses of public art elsewhere in Los

Angeles and beyond. Careful observations of public art can enhance our understanding of urban processes and their outcomes.

Notes

1 Given questions of access and visibility, exterior murals in the area that could not be seen from a public street (e.g., on schools) were excluded from the analysis. “Wildstyle” graffiti, while unarguably artistic, was also excluded from the analysis, as was the work on the Public Art Walls on the Venice Beach. For more on the moral geographies associated with labels such as “graffiti” and “street” art, see McAuliffe (2012).

2 One possible reason for Venice’s relative deterioration in the 1950s and 1960s was its ambiguous political status: the area had been represented by two different city council, state assembly, and U.S. congressional districts and lacked a single, uniform representation at any of the three levels of government. This has forced individual neighborhoods within Venice to be the most salient spatial units, as opposed to Venice as a whole (Cunningham 1976).

3 Due to the way in which the Census Bureau reports this data and the summative calculations conducted here, the figure provided for the Venice study area indicates the average median household income.

4 As a percent of the population over twenty-five years.

5 An interesting examination of the tension between graffiti and murals in Los Angeles is offered by Bloch (2016).

6 See Schmidt-Brümmer (1972) for a fascinating examination of Venice in the early 1970s. The author includes many illustrations of contemporaneous Venice’s public art, none of which is visible today.

7 This figure includes exterior and interior murals.

8 Kayzar (2016) provides an in-depth examination of the ephemerality of public art and its outcomes.

9 Another unique example of temporality: a public artwork that has been painted with special paint to “glow” at night under the effect of a black (ultraviolet) light.

10 This is not to claim that vandalism does not occur. Two instances of vandalism of public art in Venice received widespread news coverage: the vandalism of the POW/MIA memorial in 2016, and the vandalism of a LeBron James mural in 2018. In the latter case, the artwork was not restored.

11 For example, the neighborhood boundaries run down the middle of specific streets. Significant public artworks on the “out-of-area” side of these boundary streets are excluded from the analysis, even though they are a part of the cultural landscape.

Supplemental Digital Content

Please visit <http://geography.fullerton.edu/faculty/SalimResearch.aspx> to access a variety of digital content that supplements this article, including Story Maps, directions for a walking tour of public art in Venice, and a slideshow of color images.

Acknowledgments

The support of AS, IS, EV, and VV made the extensive field survey process successful and rewarding. Vanessa Engstrom’s cartography (Figure 1) and Dylan McDaniel’s assistance with several of the supplementary items (available at the link mentioned above) are especially appreciated.

References

- Amin, A. 2008. Collective culture and urban public space. *City* 12 (1):5–24.
- Arreola, D. 1984. Mexican American exterior murals. *Geographical Review* 74 (4):409–424.
- Avila, E. 2014. LA’s invisible freeway revolt: The cultural politics of fighting freeways. *Journal of Urban History* 40 (5):831–842.
- Bengtson, P. 2014. *The Street Art World*. Lund: Almedros de Granada Press.
- Bloch, S. 2016. Why do graffiti writers write on murals? The birth, life, and slow death of freeway murals in Los Angeles. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 40 (2):451–471.
- Chakravarty, S., and F. Chan. 2016. Imagining shared space: Multivalent murals in new ethnic “-Towns” of Los Angeles. *Space and Culture* 19 (4):406–420.
- Chang, T. C. 2008. Art and soul: Powerful and powerless art in Singapore. *Environment and Planning A* 40:1921–1943.
- Chehabi, H., and F. Christia. 2008. The art of state persuasion: Iran’s post-Revolutionary murals. *Persica* 22:1–13.
- Corrigan, T., and P. Polk. 2014. Productos Latinos: Latino business murals, symbolism, and the social enactment of identity in greater Los Angeles. *Journal of American Folklore* 127 (505):285–320.
- Cunningham, L. 1976. *Venice, California: From City to Suburb*. Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Davidson, R. 2007. The beach versus “Blade Runner”: Recasting Los Angeles’ relationship to modernity. *Historical Geography* 35:56–79.

- Deener, A. 2007. Commerce as the structure and symbol of neighborhood life: Reshaping the meaning of community in Venice, California. *City and Community* 6 (4):291–314.
- Droney, D. 2010. The business of “getting up”: Street art and marketing in Los Angeles. *Visual Anthropology* 23 (2):98–114.
- Dunitz, R. 1993. *Street Gallery: Guide to 1000 Los Angeles Murals*. Los Angeles: RJD Enterprises.
- . 1998. *Street Gallery: Guide to 1000 Los Angeles Murals*. Los Angeles: RJD Enterprises.
- Goalwin, G. 2013. The art of war: Instability, insecurity, and ideological imagery in Northern Ireland’s political murals, 1979–1998. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26 (3):189–215.
- Hall, T., and I. Robertson. 2001. Public art and urban regeneration: Advocacy, claims and critical debates. *Landscape Research* 1:5–26.
- Hanney, D. 2005. *Venice, California: A Centennial Commemoration in Postcards (1905–2005)*. Santa Fe, NM: Center for American Places.
- Hannum, K., and M. Rhodes II. 2018. Public art as public pedagogy: Memorial landscapes of the Cambodian genocide. *Journal of Cultural Geography* 35 (4):334–361.
- Harvey, D. 2012. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London: Verso.
- Holscher L. 1976. Artists and murals in East Los Angeles and Boyle Heights: A sociological observation. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 3:25–29.
- Home Owners Loan Corporation. 1939. City Survey Files, Area C-67, Los Angeles. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- . 1939. City Survey Files, Area D-25, Los Angeles. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- . 1939. City Survey Files, Area D-26, Los Angeles. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- Jarman, N. 1996. Violent men, violent land: Dramatizing the troubles and the landscape of Ulster. *Journal of Material Culture* 1 (1):39–61.
- Kayzar, B. 2016. Ephemeral conciliation: Community-based art and redevelopment. *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 78:28–46.
- Landres, J. 2002. Public art as sacred space: Asian American community murals in Los Angeles. In *Practicing Religion in the Age of Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture*, eds. S. Hoover and L. Clark, 91–110. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lipton, L. 1959. *The Holy Barbarians*. New York: Julian Messner.
- Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation. 2016. Venice Beach. <https://www.laparks.org/venice> [last accessed 6 January 2019]
- Marschall, S. 2002. Sites of identity and resistance: Urban community murals and rural wall decoration in South Africa. *African Arts* 35 (3):40–55.
- McAuliffe, C. 2012. Graffiti or street art? Negotiating the moral geographies of the creative city. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 34 (2):189–206.
- McCarthy, J. 2006. Regeneration of cultural quarters: Public art for place image or place identity? *Journal of Urban Design* 11 (2):243–262.
- Miles, M. 1997. *Art, Space, and the City: Public Art and Urban Features*. London: Routledge.
- Pinder, D. 2008. Urban interventions: Art, politics and pedagogy. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32 (3):730–736.
- Riggle, N. 2010. Street art: The transfiguration of the commonplaces. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68 (3):243–257.
- Roberts, M., and C. Marsh. 1995. For art’s sake: public art, planning policies and the benefits for commercial property. *Planning Practice and Research* 10:189–198.
- Robertson, I., and P. Richards. 2003. *Studying cultural landscapes*. London: Arnold.
- Rolston, B. 2011. ¡Hasta la victoria!: Murals and resistance in Santiago, Chile. *Identities* 18 (2):113–137.
- . 2014. Message of allegiance and defiance: The murals of Gaza. *Race and Class* 55 (4):40–64.
- Salim, Z. 2017. Painting a place: A spatiothematic analysis of murals in East Los Angeles. *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 79:41–70.
- Sanchez, C. 2011. *On location: “Touch of Evil”’s border showdown*. <https://www.npr.org/2011/08/09/139152265/on-location-touch-of-evils-border-showdown> [last accessed 6 January 2019]
- Sapega, E. 2002. Image and counter-image: The place of Salazarist images of national identity in contemporary Portuguese visual culture. *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39 (2):45–64.
- Schmidt-Brümmer, H. 1972. *Venice, California: An urban fantasy*. New York: Grossman.
- Schneller, A., and A. Irizarry. 2014. Imaging conservation: Sea turtle murals and their effect on community pro-environmental attitudes in Baja California Sur, Mexico. *Ocean and Coastal Management* 89:100–111.
- Schrank, S. 2010. Public art at the global crossroads: The politics of place in 1930s Los Angeles. *Journal of Social History* 44:435–457.

Sharp, J. 2007. The life and death of five spaces: Public art and community regeneration in Glasgow. *cultural geographies* 14:274–292.

Tuan, Y-F. 1974. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes, and Values*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Umemoto, K. 2007. *The Truce: Lessons from a Gang War*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Zebracki, M., R. Van Der Vaart, and I. Van Aalst. 2010. Deconstructing public artopia: Situating public-art claims within practice. *Geoforum* 41:786–795.

Appendix: Selected characteristics from the 1939 HOLC reports for present-day Venice

	South Venice	Venice	East Venice
Occupation	Laborers, WPA workers, and beachcombers	Skilled artisans, white collar workers, WPA workers, small-business men, etc.	Skilled artisans, white collar workers, laborers, etc.
Nationalities	Italians, Mexicans, and Japanese	Mexicans, Japanese, and Italians	None subversive
Description and Characteristics of Area	... An old area inclined to be “shacky” with nondescript population in western part. Eastern part is also old but of slightly better grade. Subversive population scattered throughout. Proximity to oil wells is detrimental influence. Schools, churches, trading centers, recreational areas and transportation all available. Included in this area is the old Venice summer resort and it is said that promoters are seeking to revive and popularize it but failure is predicted.	... This is a very old area, 40 to 50 years at least. . . . Population and improvements are extremely heterogeneous. Maintenance is spotty, being largely poor in character with little evidence of pride of occupancy. Most of the new construction is substandard and much of it is of the “jerry built” variety. Crowded improvements in the area constitute a distinct fire hazard and give district a “slum” aspect. Many mortgage institutions will not operate in area. The eastern part of area is generally better grade than the balance. The area is blighted and is accorded a “low red” grade.	... Deed restrictions limit improvements to single family structures. Schools and churches are conveniently available, trading centers are somewhat distant, and transportation is generally inadequate. This area was subdivided some 15 years ago and has made slow progress since. . . . Construction ranges from substandard to standard quality, with some evidence of “jerry” building. . . . Maintenance very generally indicates pride of occupancy. Population and improvements are both inclined to be heterogeneous. . . . While trend of desirability has been slightly upward for past five years, it is not believed that this will continue and the area is, therefore, accorded a “low yellow” grade.

Source: Home Owners Loan Corporation, 1939.