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May 19, 2015

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38 remarkable places to encounter public art in Los Angeles

From Santa Monica to the Valley

By [Bianca Barragan](#) Updated Jul 16, 2018, 1:21pm PDT

Photo by Courtesy of the Triforium Project

Summer's longer days mean more time to poke around the city and explore new neighborhoods. With that in mind, here's our map of notable public art in LA, highlighting some of the coolest murals, sculptures, and installations in the city.

We've included newer pieces—a mural on Skid Row created by residents of the neighborhood—as well as time-tested favorites like “Urban Light” at LACMA. Good public art doesn't just live in Central LA, as a row of murals on a Pacoima street or a giant fork stuck in a Pasadena road show.

An urban-scale rainbow, an interactive hologram, and a space-age sculpture on the brink of restoration—all those and more are featured on this 38-point guide to finding public art wherever you go in Los Angeles.

1. "Urban Light" by Chris Burden

[Copy Link](#)

5905 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036

[Visit Website](#)

Los Angeles's own Eiffel Tower (or Empire State Building or London Eye) is made up of 202 cast-iron street lamps, many of which [once stood on LA streets](#). The lights are now solar-powered and come on every night at dusk. If you don't want to stand on Wilshire watching them all night, they do have [their own "virtual flipbook" ap](#).



Michael

Gordon / Shutterstock.com

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2. "America Tropical" by David Alfaro Siqueiros

[Copy Link](#)

125 Paseo De La Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012

[Visit Website](#)

"America Tropical" was painted on the Italian Hall at El Pueblo in 1932, but whitewashed shortly after. The Getty Conservation Institute and the city of Los Angeles finished up a [long-term conservation](#) on the mural in 2012.



Via The Getty Research

Institute, Los Angeles

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3. The Triforium by Joseph Young

[Copy Link](#)

N Main St
Los Angeles, CA 90012

[Visit Website](#)

Since its unveiling in 1975, this “polyphonoptic sculpture” by mosaic artist and sculptor Joseph Young has been on a rollercoaster. Widely mocked as a boondoggle since its opening, the sculpture faded into the background until recent years, when a [campaign to restore it](#) gained steam.



Courtesy of the Triforium

Project

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4. Skid Row Mural by Skid Row residents

[Copy Link](#)

East 5th Street & San Julian Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013

[Visit Website](#)

Between Fifth and Sixth streets on San Julian, this mural depicts the borders of Skid Row and orients the viewer in the area. This mural is the first to be planned, created, and paid for entirely by residents of the neighborhood, without any help or funding from nonprofits.



Photo by Stephen Zeigler

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5. Parking by Banksy

[Copy Link](#)

908 Broadway
Los Angeles, CA 90015

This Banksy piece went up in the spring of 2010 on the side of [jewelry designer Tarina Tarantino's Sparkle Factory](#) in Downtown. It has stayed intact despite an incident which resulted in part of it being [temporarily vandalized](#).

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6. Mural Mile by various artists

[Copy Link](#)

13161 Van Nuys Boulevard
Pacoima, CA 91331

[Visit Website](#)

A stretch of Van Nuys Boulevard in Pacoima is painted with so many awesome murals that it's been dubbed [Mural Mile](#). Works by Levi Ponce and Hector Ponce can be spotted among the many, many pieces on walls of salons, markets, and other small businesses.

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7. "Projection" by Vincent Lamouroux

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4301 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90029

[Visit Website](#)

Last month, the spooky ruin that was the Sunset Pacific motel was transformed into a giant white art piece that the artist says was intended to both blend in and stand out. The hotel is expected to be razed to make way for [one of three](#) mixed-use complexes planned for Sunset Junction.



Photo by [Elizabeth Daniels](#)

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8. "Levitated Mass" by Michael Heizer

[Copy Link](#)

5905 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036

[Visit Website](#)

"Levitated Mass" is a 340-ton boulder resting on a 456-foot-long walk-through trench on LACMA's northwest corner.

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9. "The Wall That Speaks, Sings, and Shouts" by Paul Botello

[Copy Link](#)

3864 Whittier Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90023

(323) 260-2330

[Visit Website](#)

This mural at Ruben F. Salazar Park was commissioned in 2000 by the famed norteño band Los Tigres del Norte.



Via [LA County Arts](#)

[Commission](#)

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10. "Los Angeles Opens Its Heart of Compassion" by Cliff Garten

[Copy Link](#)

3150 Wilshire Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90010

[Visit Website](#)

This 15-foot tall, 10-foot wide chandelier is "[created by a cylindrical array](#) of abstracted lotus flower shapes made of laser-cut aluminum and illuminated with white light." The lotus is a symbol of enlightenment in Korean culture.

It sits out in front of [The Vermont](#) apartment complex, obscuring the parking structure.

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11. "City of Dreams/ River of History" by Richard Wyatt

[Copy Link](#)

800 N Alameda St
Los Angeles, CA 90012

[Visit Website](#)

Find this mural at Union Station, where the tunnels to the Amtrak/MetroLink trains meet Patsaouras Plaza. It [reflects](#) all Angelenos, past and present, showing Native Americans, settlers, and present-day residents of LA.

Wyatt's done [a number of other projects](#) throughout the city in areas that accommodate mass transit, like the 110 Freeway and a Purple Line station.

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12. "Generators of the Cylinder" by Michael Hayden

[Copy Link](#)

550 South Hill Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013

[Visit Website](#)

Colorful circles in front of the International Jewelry Center employ "holograms, a hidden computer, and infrared sensors to reflect the motions of passers-by back at them in 'flashes and swirls' of a rainbow of colors."

Installed in 1981, the sculpture shut down in 2008, and was refurbished, repaired, and turned back on in January 2015.



Hayden

Courtesy of Michael

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13. Elvis Presley, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Marilyn Monroe, Beatles by Hector Ponce

[Copy Link](#)

5640 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90038

Hollywood specializes in odd celebrity murals, but these are some of the most recognizable ones. They were painted in 2001 on the side of the otherwise [unremarkable Harvey Apartments](#). They [underwent restoration](#) in 2016.



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14. "The Wall Project" by various artists

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5900 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Ten original segments of the Berlin Wall [arrived in Los Angeles](#) in late 2009; they were installed on Wilshire Boulevard and painted by artists including Kent Twitchell and Thierry Noir. [According to the Wende Museum](#), which brought the pieces to LA, they "form the longest stretch of this iconic historical monument outside of Berlin."

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15. "Almost Invisible Boxes" by Joshua Callaghan

[Copy Link](#)

[Visit Website](#)

Don't embarrass yourself by walking into one of these nine crafty pieces—they blend into the downtown Culver City landscape at first, but they're actually utility boxes wrapped in vinyl that's printed with images of the surrounding area.



Via City of Culver City

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16. Sidewalk terrazzo by Arthur D. Pizzinat, Sr.

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648 Broadway
Los Angeles, CA 90014

The sidewalk terrazzo in front of Clifton's Cafeteria on Broadway dates back to the 1930s and includes representations of SoCal landmarks including City Hall, the Coliseum, and the Tar Pits.



Courtesy of Wendy Chan

of AHBE Landscape Architects / AHBE Lab

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17. "Blacklist" by Jenny Holzer

[Copy Link](#)

823 Exposition Boulevard, The University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA 90007

[Visit Website](#)

In 1999, faculty in USC's Filmic Writing Program commissioned "Blacklist," which consists of 10 stone benches engraved with quotes from members of the blacklisted Hollywood Ten. The piece sits in a garden designed by Professor Achva Benzinberg Stein.

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18. "Motordom" by Keith Sonnier

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100 South Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

"Motordom" is four stories of neon and argon tubes that send red and blue light flashing around Caltrans District 7's outdoor lobby, through its glass walls, and into the Morphosis-designed building.

According to the Department of Transportation, it's the largest public art installation in LA.

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19. "Cradle" by Ball-Nogues

[Copy Link](#)

395 Santa Monica Place
Santa Monica, CA 90401

[Visit Website](#)

"Cradle" is made up of hundreds of stainless steel balls hanging in office toy formation off the side of the parking structure at the Santa Monica Place mall. The piece went up in the summer of 2010.



Jonathan Grado/Creative

Commons

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20. "Drive By" by Electroland

[Copy Link](#)

5300 Lankershim Boulevard
North Hollywood, CA 91601

"Drive By" is 240 feet of scrolling LED movie quotes ("Forget it, Jake. It's Chinatown," for instance). It went up and came down pretty quickly back in 2007, when the city decided it qualified as an advertisement. After a long fight, [the piece went back up](#) on NoHo Commons in early 2011.

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21. "Four Arches" by Alexander Calder

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333 South Hope Street
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Calder's sculpture is 63 feet tall and bright orangey red, so it stands out on Bunker Hill, where it sits in the Bank of America building's plaza.

According to the Community Redevelopment Agency of LA, which commissioned the piece in the 1970s, its main curves stem from one main spine.

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22. "Luminous Sphere" by Piero Golia

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8300 Sunset Plaza Place
West Hollywood, CA 90069

Golia helpfully put up this Golia-tracker [on top of the Standard Hotel](#) in early 2010. The giant, circular white light glows only when the artist is in Los Angeles.

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23. "Great Wall of Los Angeles" by Judith Baca

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Burbank Boulevard & Coldwater Canyon Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 91401

The Great Wall of Los Angeles stretches for a half a mile along the Tujunga Flood Control Channel and tells the history of California starting in the prehistoric era. It was started in 1974 and painted by hundreds of young locals, along with artists and other community members.

The Social and Public Art Resource Center, the group that created the mural, has been working on a major restoration and extension, as well as a pedestrian bridge that would cross over the wash and offer better views of the piece.

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24. Hollywood/Vine Red Line Station by Gilbert "Magu" Lujan

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Hollywood Boulevard & Vine Street
Los Angeles, CA 90028

For the subway station at the most famous intersection in town, Gilbert "Magu" Lujan (with Miralles Associates, Inc.) went all out. [As Metro describes:](#) "Bus shelter designs make reference to Grauman's Chinese Theater, a stretch limousine, and the Brown Derby Restaurant. The elevator entrance resembles a movie theater with its marquee greeting riders on the street."

Leading passengers from the entrance plaza to the platform is a tiled path intended to evoke the yellow brick road from the "Wizard of Oz." The way to the platform is also lined with 240 hand-painted art tiles on the walls.

Once inside the station, the art doesn't stop. The interior contains numerous references to the film industry, including decorative film reels on the ceiling and two original film projectors from the 1930s, donated by Paramount Pictures.

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25. "Inverted Clocktower" by Tim Hawkinson

[Copy Link](#)

West 3rd Street & South Hill Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013

[Visit Website](#)

The "Inverted Clocktower" is made to look like the relief of a clocktower that was magically removed whole from the corner of the Grand Central Market's parking structure. The clocktower's clock dials run counterclockwise and its Roman numerals are reversed.

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26. "sixbeaststwomonkeys" by Peter Shelton

[Copy Link](#)

100 West 1st Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

What are the sculptures of "sixbeaststwomonkeys," which sit alongside the LAPD headquarters Downtown? Then-Chief Bill Bratton guessed they were "some kind of cow splat" when [they were installed](#) in 2009. Headless animals? Creepy babies? Who knows, but everyone seems to have an odd fondness for them anyway.

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27. LAX Pylons by Paul Tzanetopoulos/Ted Tokio Tanaka

[Copy Link](#)

1 World Way, Los Angeles International Airport
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Thanks to Hollywood, the pylons and LAX letters at LAX are familiar the world over after only 15 years in place. Tanaka's letters are 32 feet high; Tzanetopoulos's 26 pylons range from 25 to 60 feet along Century Blvd. and hit 100 feet at Century and Sepulveda.

The lights were replaced with LEDs in 2006—they "burn less electricity while providing more vibrant hues," [according to Los Angeles World Airports](#). However, the pylons' electricity still costs the airport \$18,000 a year.



[John Murphy](#)/Creative

[Commons](#)

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28. "TEUCLA" by Richard Serra

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405 Hilgard Avenue, University of California Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA 90095

"TEUCLA" is 42.5 tons of signature Serra—a "torqued ellipse" twisting its way around the plaza of the Broad Art Center at UCLA.

When it was installed in 2006, it was the first work by Serra "to be on permanent view in a public space in Southern California," [according to the university's Art Center](#).

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29. "Fork in the Road" by Ken Marshall

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South Pasadena Avenue & South Saint John Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91105

Pasadena's giant fork in the road is technically, in a Caltrans median. It first went up [in the dead of night in 2009](#), as a birthday prank for a comedy club owner. Everyone took such a shine to it that, after some time off the road, it was [stuck in permanently](#) in October 2011.

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30. Venice Art Walls by Anyone With a Permit

[Copy Link](#)

1800 Ocean Front Walk
Los Angeles, CA 90291

[Visit Website](#)

The Venice Art Walls are open for painting by any artist with a permit and the urge (on weekends and holidays anyway). They're [curated by In Creative Unity](#), a "graffiti arts advocacy group," that "has lead the movement to preserve the walls as a living memorial to the high quality graffiti style art which has taken place on these walls for over thirty years."

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31. Beverly/Vermont Red Line Station by George Stone

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Beverly Boulevard & North Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90004

Stone, perhaps eponymously, created rocky outcroppings throughout this subway station. [According to Metro](#), they're "based on the actual geology of this location."

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32. "Watts Towers" by Simon Rodia

[Copy Link](#)

1727 East 107th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90002

[Visit Website](#)

Italian immigrant Simon Rodia built the three Watts Towers by hand over three decades, from the 1920s through the 1950s. They're made up of steel rods wrapped in wire mesh, coated in cement and embedded with shells, ceramic shards, pieces of bottle, and other trinkets. While admission will cost you, they're visible from all over the neighborhood, which is Blue Line-accessible.

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33. "Neighborhood Portrait: Reconstructed" by Jessica Polzin McCoy

[Copy Link](#)

1043 West Exposition Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90007

[Visit Website](#)

At the Expo Line's Expo/Vermont station, these watercolor collages "describe the window frames, doorways and garden gates that define the architecture of entryways" in West Adams. On the platform, there are "similarly assembled paintings of local residents seated in the interiors of their homes."



Via Metro

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34. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar statue by Rottblatt-Amrany

[Copy Link](#)

1111 South Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015

For the art-loving sports fan or the sports-loving arts fan, the statue of Abdul-Jabbar (in skyhook position) joined the small group of statues outside Staples last year. You can also see Magic Johnson, Jerry West, Chick Hearn, Oscar de la Hoya, and Wayne Gretzky.



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35. "League of Shadows" by P-A-T-T-E-R-N-S

[Copy Link](#)

960 East 3rd Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013

[Visit Website](#)

Faculty members won a competition to design this SCI-Arc graduation pavilion, which gets its name from its sunblocking powers. Back in 2013, it was reported the piece would sit in the school's parking lot for four or five years. It's still there.

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36. "Weather Field No. 1" by Inigo Manglano-Ovalle

[Copy Link](#)

1615 Ocean Avenue
Santa Monica, CA 90401

This piece in beautiful Tongva Park is composed of 49 stainless steel poles, each with a weather vane and anemometer, which allows it to create its own very tiny microclimate.

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37. Chandelier tree by Adam Tanenbaum

[Copy Link](#)

West Silver Lake Drive & Shadowlawn Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90039

[Visit Website](#)

Artist, contractor, and set-builder Adam Tenenbaum started stringing up spare chandeliers in the tree outside his house one day with the help of his aerialist roommate, and several years later the neighborhood is in love with this lovely piece. Only in Silver Lake!

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38. "Rainbow" by Tony Tasset

[Copy Link](#)

10202 West Washington Boulevard
Culver City, CA 90232

It's not entirely public, but you can see this enormous rainbow from several spots in Culver City. The piece is supposedly a tribute to *The Wizard of Oz*, which was shot on the MGM (now Sony) lot.



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