GOAL 4 TALK ABOUT PUBLIC ART

Reading

A. List all of the places where you can see art in your city. What can you see in each place?

B. Match the sentence parts to show the reasons.
1. Artists didn’t maintain their murals __.
2. The government painted over some murals __.
3. The murals are in bad condition __.
4. Artists in L.A. started painting murals __.
5. The government is spending $1.7 million __.
6. Artists like murals __.

C. Discuss these questions with a partner.
1. Describe the murals in the pictures. What do you think they represent?
2. What is your opinion of these murals? Explain your reasons.
3. Would murals like this be popular in your city? Why, or why not?

Word Focus

mural = a painting that is made on a wall
graffiti = words that are written on a wall in a public place
diversity = including many different types of people

Avoiding L.A.’s traffic jams may be impossible, but the city’s colorful freeway murals can brighten even the worst commute. Paintings that depict famous people and historical scenes cover office buildings and freeway walls all across the city. With a collection of more than 2,000 murals, Los Angeles is the unofficial mural capital of the world.

But the combination of graffiti, pollution, and hot sun has left many L.A. murals in terrible condition. The city, trying to stop the spread of graffiti, has painted over some of the murals completely. In the past, experts say, little attention was given to caring for public art. Artists were even expected to maintain their own works, not an easy task with cars racing by along the freeway.

Now the city is beginning a huge project to restore the city’s murals. The work started in 2003. So far, 16 walls have been selected, and more may be added later.

Until about 1960, public murals in Los Angeles were rare. But in the ‘60s and ‘70s, young L.A. artists began to study early 20th-century Mexican mural painting. Soon, their murals became a symbol of the city’s cultural expression and a showcase for L.A.’s cultural diversity.

The most famous mural in the city is Judith Baca’s “The Great Wall,” a 13-foot-high (4-meter-high) painting that runs for half a mile (0.8 kilometer) in North Hollywood. The mural represents the history of ethnic groups in California. It took eight years to complete—400 underprivileged teenagers painted the designs—and is probably the longest mural in the world.

One of the murals that will be restored now is Kent Twitchell’s “Seventh Street Altarpiece,” which he painted for the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984. This striking work depicts two people facing each other on opposite sides of the freeway near downtown Los Angeles. “It was meant as a kind of gateway through which the traveler to L.A. must drive,” said Twitchell. “The open hands represent peace.”

Artists often call murals the people’s art. Along a busy freeway or hidden in a quiet neighborhood, murals can reach people who would never pay money to see fine art in a museum. “Murals give a voice to the silent majority,” said one artist.

Word Focus

ethnic = related to culture and race
underprivileged = very poor, with bad living conditions
depict = show in a picture
majority = more than half of a group

Communication

A. Your group is in charge of planning a new piece of public art for the area near your school.
1. What kind of art will you have? A mural, sculpture, stained glass, or something else?
2. Where will the art be located?
3. Draw a picture of the art.

B. Present your group’s ideas to the class.

Writing

Write about a work of art that you like. Describe what it looks like and what it represents and explain why you like it.

Goal 4 Talk about public art

Describe a piece of public art that you like (or don’t like).