

WHY MURALS

HISTORICAL RECORDINGS

For thousands of years, murals have been painted in different ways for many reasons under varying conditions: social, political, economic, and aesthetic. From cave paintings to Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel to the Chicano and African-American mural movement, murals continue to play a vital role in communities. They are a reflection of the time, place, and socio-political realm in which they are painted.

MURALS PROMOTE COMMUNITY PRIDE

A person's identification with the place in which s/he lives—houses, streets, schools, rooms—shapes that person's worldview and self-perception. For example, a community filled with vacant lots, crumbling buildings, and deteriorating wall space will have an impact on the individual's and community's sense of self and pride. In addition, a person's sense of belonging to a place is based on his or her familiarity with that place. Their sense of self is based on the places they pass in their life. A mural replaces deteriorating or dreary wall space with something that was created by those same people who will be viewing it everyday, creating familiarity and connection, thereby enhancing community pride and sense of self.

MURALS PROMOTE SELF-EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment begins to occur when participants feel and see that their voices are heard, validated, and deemed important. Urban Brushfire murals projects involve the community in every part of the mural making process, from design to implementation, which means that participants feel ownership of the mural and its design. It is a reflection of their work, their ideas, and their presence.

MURALS FOR SOCIAL MARKETING

Murals are an innovative and unique way to reach a large number of people using a very empowering and inclusionary approach to marketing. The people you are trying to reach can essentially drive a mural marketing campaign, making it relevant and appropriate. Murals can serve as advertising for an organization or a particular social theme. Similar to billboards and banners, outdoor murals send a powerful and noticeable message. Posters, t-shirts, buttons, calendars, and other mural paraphernalia have also been used for fundraising and advertising purposes.

MURALS PROMOTE HEALING

This idea is based on the theory of art communication, which proposes that art

serves to objectify human feeling so that people can contemplate and understand the world of inner experience.

MURALS PROMOTE SELF-REFLECTION

Murals build bridges between themes addressed in the mural and people trying to accomplish goals connected to those themes. For example, a mural might reflect the theme of smoking cessation. Creating the mural design requires people to reflect on their own relationship to smoking cessation and what barriers they might still need to address. The same is true for those viewing the mural. For example, a passing viewer might consider, how does smoking affect my own health?

MURALS PREVENT RISKY BEHAVIOR

People tend to avoid risky behavior and seek behaviors that promote wellness if they feel there will be a positive outcome. In other words, if people feel invested and motivated in their present and future lives, they will avoid behaviors and situations that might hinder their progress. Mural projects can provide this type of opportunity for participants to feel invested in a project of importance that will exist long after its completion.

MURALS PROMOTE TEAMWORK

There is something significant and special about the process of a group of people getting together for a common cause, regardless of their work status, age, cultural background, or class.