

## **Playhouse Village Public Art Tour**

Playhouse Village is home to numerous public art installations, adding to the cultural richness of Pasadena's premier arts district. In this self-guided tour, we hope you'll learn more about the many pieces and discover new parts of our beautiful neighborhood.

*Let's start from the center of Playhouse Village at the courtyard of Vroman's Bookstore between El Molino Ave and Oak Knoll. Within this tree-covered hideaway from the bustling Colorado Blvd are two mosaic installations.*

*Looking towards the steps right by the northern entrance to Vroman's Bookstore, you will find a set of **Mosaic Tile Murals** (695 E Colorado Blvd) by William Crite.*

The mural features a collage of beaches, green spaces, butterflies, blossoming trees, plants, and more, imitating the fantastical worlds a reader could be transported to through books and stories.

*Climbing up these stairs you will be greeted by one of our largest public art installations, **Stage & Cinema** (695 E Colorado Blvd) by Kenton Nelson behind The Andalucia.*

Created with over 170,000 tile pieces and measuring over 13 feet tall and 16 feet wide, *Stage and Cinema* celebrates the actors, directors, and production staff of the Pasadena Playhouse and its impact on the California movie industry. Part of the experience is the ability for viewers to feel the tiny Italian tiles up close and see as it all comes together to form the bigger picture as they step away from the wall. An accenting column component to the southwest of this mural continues the homage and features the names of notable stage and theatre stars who have had a connection with the Pasadena Playhouse.

*Traveling west towards El Molino Ave, within the breezeway between the storefronts of The Andalucia and painted on the walls of the Landmark Theatre is **Inspiration Blvd** (678 E Colorado Blvd) an abstract line-art installation, an abstract line-art installation by Gino Flo.*

Within the painted silhouettes of the San Gabriel Mountains are many worlds with little tributes to Pasadena and images created to inspire creativity, thought, and conversation for viewers. This mural is one of the longest public art pieces in Playhouse Village, spanning nearly 70 feet across the back wall of the Landmark Theatre. Climbing vines are planted at the base of the wall, adding a "living" element that interacts with the mural as it grows. This mural was painted in partnership with Beautify Earth.

*Let's continue! Make a right at El Molino Ave and head towards Walnut St, where you will make another right. When you arrive at the courtyard for The Hudson West, gaze up to see Kipp Kobayashi's **Connecting Flights** (678 E Walnut St)*

The interconnected five-story open space above the main entrance of the Hudson West presented itself as the perfect place to fly a paper airplane. With that idea, Kipp Kobayashi created a canopy of aerogram shapes made of forms planes and birds. These shapes appear to “flock together,” entering the space from various directions reflecting the intention of the courtyard as a public space. The artwork can be experienced from unique vantage points located both at ground level and from the floors above. Additionally, sunlight movement across the plaza produces shade and shadow patterns that are constantly shifting to the naturally changing environment.

*Continuing east on Walnut St, make a right and head south onto Oak Knoll Ave. Arriving at the corner of Oak Knoll Ave and Union St, you will find three large geometric sculptures by **Mark Lere** (140 N Oak Knoll Ave).*

These shape-forms capture the artist's goal of representing abstractions of the world and space through a variety of symbols. A towering silver-hued “Stacked Element” dominates the plaza; its uneven textured surface is designed to invite observers to feel the sculpture. A blue “Sphere” sits nearby representing the night sky, celebrating the exploration of space by nearby CalTech. The final of the three is an “Icosahedron,” bronze cast to create a jewel-like appearance as weather gently erodes and burnishes the sculpture.

Across the street right by the Target parking garage is **Imagination = Utility** (700 E Union St), one of two utility box installations by Alicia Gorecki. Using vivid illustrations, this piece brings a whimsical world that celebrates imagination through a colorful depiction of a childhood adventure including a purple dinosaur with a donut hanging from its tail and an octopus playing an instrument with each tentacle. Her second installation **Education = Utility** (135 N Oakland Ave) can be found at Fuller Seminary and honors the investment in education by conjuring local history through the depiction of one of Pasadena's first high schools that stood near that same corner.

*Continue west on Union St towards Los Robles Ave. (An easy identifier is to head towards the dome of Pasadena's City Hall.)*

As you're walking down Union St, don't forget to look up at the street light poles. Many are adorned with steel cast installations by Wayne Healy and East Los Streetscapers. The artist designed each steel wrap of **Harlequinade** (686 E Union St) with a unique design referencing the brightly-colored diamond shapes of the Harlequin character often found in the theatre. The vertical edges of the exterior octagonal cylinder

surrounding the light poles were created to symbolize the drape-like movement of the stage curtain. Each installation is one of eight designs that pay homage to Pasadena and American cultural importance. These designs include a dragon, pianist, astronomer, designer, zoot suit, chef, dancer, and trombonist.

*Let's make a pit-stop at Fuller Theological Seminary.*

Hidden across their lush green campus is Brian Fee's **Push** (135 N Oakland Ave). These three paintings rise on walls behind gardens and were designed to blend with the landscape of the campus. This installation tackles the question of what it means to act justly and illustrates how best intentions can detrimentally affect others. Borrowing from the style of Last Judgment pictures of classic painters, the main figures are suspended in mid-motion, appearing to ascend above the foliage and different subjects in the mural. The viewer's experience changes as time passes and the plants covering the murals grow, dramatically increasing the tension between the enveloping environment and figures "pushing" through.

*Heading back onto Union St by Madison Ave, you will find one of three different Utility Box art programs found in the Village.*

**Epiphanies in Pasadena** (534 E Union St) transforms two utility boxes into portals to a dream-like version of the area surrounding the boxes and offers public moments of contemplation. This effect is achieved by incorporating photographs of the area layered with painted illustrations by John David O'Brien and text by Molly Bendall. The design incorporates all sides of the box, so be sure to explore the views from each panel. Head towards the southeast corner of Los Robles Ave and Union St, right by the USC Pacific Asia Museum to find the second part of this installation.

*As you continue to walk to Los Robles Ave, you'll catch a clear view of **Sign of the Time** (473 E Union St) by Jack Sullivan.*

Upon first glance, the sculpture appears as one giant road sign hanging above the Union Street Parking Garage where it greets drivers passing inside or cruising down the street. A closer look reveals that the artist pieced together 25 diamond-shaped, yellow road signs into the form of one large universal sign. The deliberate layout of the signs' graphic elements creates engaging and lively movement for the viewer's eye to follow.

*Continue down Union Street going west toward Los Robles Ave, located in the parking lot of USC Pacific Asia Museum you will find **A Momentous Moment in Time of Passage and Landing, 2024** by Dave Young Kim.*

This mural celebrates the journeys that diasporic communities have undertaken when leaving their homelands to find new places to nest. Muralist Dave Young Kim's *A Momentous Moment in Time of Passage and Landing* imagines over 30 birds traveling together in harmonious flight. Each bird pictured here is an official national bird from Asia and the Pacific Islands, representing the diverse communities who now call Southern California home.

Kim explains that the message of a flock of birds moving together towards a common goal—seeking a new home, settling in, and finding resources for survival—is universally felt. Through this common experience and undeniable history, we are connected. These shared experiences are the basis of the human condition.

*Now that you've made it to the most western edge of the Village, make a left on Los Robles Ave and continue south towards Colorado Blvd. Take a quick detour into the parking lot for Southern California Children's Museum for our next piece.*

Looking for creative ways to give back to the community, and a serendipitous collaboration – **Shine Bright** (459 E Colorado Blvd) is the colorful results formed by artist Amy Tangerine and the Southern California Children's Museum. The mural features a rising sun with a burst of rays in every shade of the rainbow, leaving the space full of vibrancy and positivity. Capping the piece is a reminder for all children (and children-at-heart) to "shine bright." This piece is located in the parking lot of the Southern California Children's Museum and can be viewed during their normal operating hours.

*Continue south on Los Robles and make a left on Colorado Blvd.*

Southern California Children's Museum is also home to a second mural, which can be found on their façade facing Colorado Blvd. Eric Junker's **Untitled II** (459 E Colorado Blvd) mural adorns the façade of the museum. Through this mural, Junker seeks to remind people about nature and the lost history of the urban places we experience every day. The mural illustrates how what we now call Pasadena was not long ago an ecologically diverse, natural environment that supported a thriving indigenous culture. The mural is a dreamscape featuring symbols of this rich ancient landscape: a Tongva water goddess, an eye that represents the sunrise in the east, and an eye that represents the sunset in the west. Additionally, the mural includes plants and animals (hawk, white sage, poppies, oak trees, deer, buckwheat, yucca, and crows), many of which can still be found in the foothills that surround Pasadena today.

*On the south side of Colorado Blvd, you can find one of the Village's most iconic utility box installations. To view the first of the five designs in Susan Silton's **Utility II** (440 E Colorado Blvd), head back to Los Robles and cross the street.*

This 2016 public art installation is an update of her 2011 installation called *Utility*. The updated art carries on the theme of freedom-of-speech crusaders who shaped our country such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Benjamin Franklin while incorporating powerful statements evoking responsibility from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cordoza, and workers' rights leader Cesar Chavez. Accompanying each piece are photographs of powerful movements that exemplify the messages of the speeches used. The utility boxes are all accessible by car and foot along Colorado Boulevard at the southeast corners of the intersections of Los Robles, Oakland, Madison, El Molino, and Oak Knoll.

*Let's keep making our way down Colorado Blvd towards Urth Caffè on Madison Ave. Make a right to head south towards Green St. Once you've made it to the corner of Madison Ave and Green St, look across Madison Ave to see our next installation.*

In 2015, Playhouse Village unveiled three crosswalk designs titled **River Migration** (572 E Green St) by local artist Hataya Tubtim. The works explore how art can make a presence in public space without intruding upon those who will experience it. In this design, Hataya uses the movement of Steelhead Trout - which is native to the Arroyo Seco's local natural history - over three crosswalk sites to echo the movement of people moving through the urban environment. This is one of two crosswalk art programs in the Village.

*Walk eastward towards El Molino Ave to our next stop.*

In the parking lot between Jacob Maarse Florists and Kornrandolph's office, are full wall-length murals made in partnership with Beautify Earth. On the east-facing wall is an **Untitled** (609 E Green St) piece by Spencer Mar Guilburt. He uses his signature fire-flower motif as a framework to explore repetition, and its ability to unlock insights, especially into one's self. This piece blooms through the entire face of the wall. Each graphic element is spray painted meticulously and organically traverses through the building, shape by shape.

On the west-facing wall is Southern California-based artist Trek Thunder Kelly's **Bee Kind** (609 E Green St.) This nature-inspired mural on Green Street behind Jacob Maarse Florists & Gifts, Trek encourages people to think and act with kindness. This painted piece features photo-realistic renderings of natural elements like bees, plants, and flowers. A portion of this mural was painted by the community during the 2018 Pasadena ARTWalk. We hope you took a few photos with these murals. Let's keep going!

*Continue eastward on Green St on the left side of the street until you've made it to shared the parking lot of Arcade Lane (713 E Green St), where you will find our next mural on the wall of The Monarca Collective.*

The Monarca Collective's mural **Visions of Healing** was created as part of 2022's Why We Rise LA, a yearly art festival organized by the Los Angeles Department of Mental Health that supports health and healing across LA County. Led by Lilia Ramirez (Liliflor), she and sponsoring art non-profit organization Mujeres De Maiz, led two community workshops to help piece together a mural, focusing on how nature is healing to them.

With pieces of information from the community, Liliflor came up with a sketch that focuses on cultural symbolisms of healing such as the hummingbirds and Aztek symbols of butterflies and water as well as California native medicinal plants.

*Head back west on Green St and make a right on El Molino Ave., stopping in front of the Pasadena Playhouse.*

To the right in Playhouse Plaza is a gleaming bronze sculpture by Ramon Velazco. Jesters and Harlequins were animated storytellers and this piece, **The Performer** (38 S El Molino Ave), pays homage to the storytellers who graced the Pasadena Playhouse stage. A "talking tube" placed nearby is connected to a bench and the base of the sculpture. Viewers are encouraged to share their tales through the "talking tube" and bring the jester to life as their voices are amplified.

Inside the Pasadena Playhouse Courtyard, please enjoy a quick moment by the **fountain**. This ornate installation almost didn't come into existence. Original to the Playhouse designs, disagreements on where to place the fountain and funding had prevented the initial installation. However, with the support and fundraising efforts of actors from the first year of shows at the Playhouse, the fountain was installed a year after the theater's opening. The fountain was designed by famous Pasadena tile designer and maker, Ernest Batchelder, who also designed the fireplace inside the Playhouse Library.

You may have noticed a similar design as you were traveling across the Village earlier. Spanning across the speed table on El Molino Ave is our original crosswalk art program **Moonwalk** (39 S El Molino Ave) by Cynthia Luna. Moonwalk features Cynthia's stencil patterns and can be seen across various intersections of Playhouse Village. The crosswalk design is created with Luna's decorative technique that combines custom-made patterns with paint to transform spaces and objects. The designs include Gingko, Art Deco, and Rose-inspired patterns, which refer to Pasadena's trees, architecture, and Rose Parade, respectively. Find the other patterns on El Molino Ave & Walnut St and Lake Ave & Walnut St.

*Continue heading north on El Molino Ave, towards Colorado Blvd. You won't be able to miss our next piece as it towers over all the hustle and bustle of the streets below.*

**Three Graces** (621 E Colorado Blvd) by Peter Fink presides over the northwestern corner of El Molino Ave and Colorado Blvd. The three abstract kinetic sculptures are inspired by the three Greek Mythological graces: beauty, joy, and friendship. Made of stainless steel, the sculptures are illuminated by sunlight during the day and by a programmed sequence of colored light at night. The sculptures appear to be in constant change when they sway and spin as guided by the wind.

*Make a left on Colorado Blvd to see the colorful mural at Modern Animal (616 E Colorado Blvd).*

This is the second bold mural by **Eric Junker** in Playhouse Village, depicting a vibrant and dynamic scene that blends elements of nature with human and pet connection. The focal point is a resplendent sun radiating warm rays over a heartwarming vignette capturing the essence of everyday life: a pet owner joyfully interacting with their dog, sharing a playful moment of companionship. Nearby, a sleeping cat basks in the tranquil ambiance and birds soar through an array of flowers.

*Head back east on Colorado Blvd and cross the street to make your way back to Vroman's Bookstore, and you'll find a love letter greeting you.*

WRDSMTH is famed for the messages he delivers through murals and paintings of all sizes seen around the globe. His pieces often include his signature typewriter stencil, serif font, and pops of color. This literary-themed WRDSMTH original, **Not Fiction** (695 E Colorado Blvd) delivers a sweet love note to all who read it. Head into the paseo and you will be greeted by another mural, **Artemis** by Reef Kills. Crafted in his signature abstraction, the mural pays homage to Greek mythology. These murals were painted in partnership with Beautify Earth.

While we're here, explore the bookstore, catch a movie at Landmark Theatre, or refuel at one of the many restaurants and cafes. Here you might even come across our set of Thomas Heatherwick's **Spun Chairs**. Take a spin on one if you see them!

*For the last stretch of this tour, we will be traveling east on Colorado Blvd, to Lake Ave. Make a right on Lake Ave, where peppered across many of the buildings are art installations of multiple mediums.*

The first stop is Smash House Burger Co. (46 N Lake Ave) where you will find a mural located on the interior wall of their back patio. **Live Life Now** by artist Gabriel Flores evokes a spirit of fun and good vibes, echoing the comic-book theme painted on the interior walls of the business.

Move to the north side wall of Smash House Burger Co. (46 N Lake Ave) and find the latest mural in Playhouse Village, funded by Playhouse Village Association in partnership with Beautify Earth. **The Couto Brothers'** mural bursts with vibrant hues and dynamic shapes, weaving a mesmerizing tapestry that invites viewers into a kaleidoscopic journey. Through a harmonious dance of contrasting and complementary colors, they offer a refreshing perspective that celebrates the boundless creativity of self-taught artistry.

*Continue north on Lake Ave for the next piece.*

Our next stop is **Settebello** (60 N Lake), a mural named after the business' namesake Settebello Pasadena. You will find a familiar face gracing the side of the building—the famed actress Sophia Loren. Artists John Parks and Julie Marie Hunter handled all the graphic design for this mural in partnership with Beautify Earth.

*Head north on Lake Ave and take a detour by making a right on Union St. On the corner of Union St and Catalina Ave you will view Christine Beniston's **Topiaries** (998 Union St).*

Representing man's intervention in nature, the colorful sculpture and its placement in an urban setting symbolize the human drive to influence nature. This piece was inspired by James Shirley Hibberd's quote "...the natural form of a tree is the most beautiful possible for that tree, but it may happen that we do not want the most beautiful form, but one of our own designing, and expressive of our ingenuity." **Topiaries** sits in a formerly unused parcel of land that has transformed into a beautiful and self-sustaining rain garden.

*Head back east on Union St towards Lake Ave, where you will make a right to continue the tour at the Crown City Building (203 N Lake Ave).*

Etched onto the grounds leading to the circular entrance of the building is **Flow** (203 N Lake Ave) by May Sun. This piece features bronze images of leaves from trees found in Pasadena and native and extinct fish that once lived in the rivers and streams nearby. This piece brings a whimsical narrative about the history of the San Gabriel Valley for those visiting the building or simply strolling by.

Within the circular lobby are a pair of paintings. **Woman at Dusk** (203 N Lake Ave) by Sally Storch is a mural that features a woman at sunset walking past an artist's



depiction of the Crown City Building. Capturing a singular moment and the activity of the bustling Pasadena cityscape, the artist invites viewers to ponder on what the subject and its scene partners are doing amidst a golden-hued setting.

Complimenting his wife, Ray Turner's mural **Mt. Wilson at Dusk** (203 N Lake Ave) focuses on capturing a singular peace of Pasadena's landscape. Spotlighting the vista of the San Gabriel Mountains that can be viewed across Pasadena, the artist focuses on Mt. Wilson with Pasadena faintly sprawled near the base of the painting. This Plein air-inspired piece is based on a photograph of Mt. Wilson, captured at the building's rooftop adjacent to 203 N Lake Ave.

Outside the parking structure is the last piece within this complex. Gleaming on the elevator shafts of the parking structure, **Light Trap** (203 N Lake Ave) by Laddie John Dill are two colorful aluminum panels that soar above the complex's courtyard. Burnished with an oil finish, the piece captures and reflects sunlight. The texture on the panels was created to imitate the local landscape and environment.

*Further north and the other side of Lake Ave, is our next stop at 224 N Lake Ave.*

The story goes that it takes a certain amount of paces and stops to make it around the building's entryway. **317 Paces and 21 Stops** (224 N Lake Ave) by Renee Petropoulos explores just that. This whimsical terrazzo hardscape wraps around the corner of the building in a progression of repeated colors and patterns formed by stones and pavers. Depending on where this piece is viewed, the viewer's experience changes. On the ground level, the patterns act as a visual trail to the building's entrances. From above, you can fully grasp and see the full picture of the patterns form and how they clash and flow into each other.

*Continuing north towards the mountains to 250 N Lake Ave, a mural blooms alongside the street.*

**Sofia** (250 N Lake Ave) is a colorful mural created by Beautify Earth CEO, Evan Meyer. A flower radiates above a kaleidoscope of color and pattern. At the center of the piece is a heart that appears to glow when the sun interacts with the mural at the right moment. Alongside her parents, a little girl named Sofia stopped by to view the work in progress and inspired the name for the piece. The artist wishes that the mural "light up the days and spirits of all who see it."

*We end our tour at **Gateway Beacon**, a sculpture by David F. Wilkinson at 269 N Lake Ave.*

This pair of 42-foot granite pillars welcomes visitors to Playhouse Village as they exit from the 210 Freeway and onto Lake Ave. The height and design of this piece form a visual gateway and marker. Placed side-by-side, the crescent cut-outs from each pillar create an abstract circular crevice that plays with the sunlight that passes through it onto the plaza.

Congratulations! At the completion of this tour, you have seen 33 different art installations across Playhouse Village. The neighborhood is constantly growing and changing, and new installations will continue to bloom throughout. We hope that you enjoy the rest of what the Village has to offer and see you soon with more stops on our Public Art Tour.

*Updated April 30, 2024.*