

# Lesson Plan: Learning to See Public Art

**Topic/Theme:** Learning to see and understand art in public places in our community.

**Class Level:** Middle School | High School

**Duration:** 45 minutes

## Learning Experience: Brief Description of Unit:

This session addresses how we learn to look at public art in city places. Public art can tell us stories, teach us values and ask us to reflect on our community, giving encouragement to students to consider how to make and contribute to civic life.

## Specific Learning Objectives:

**Cultural Context:** Students learn about what cultural context is and how to read it.

**Artwork:** Students learn about visual perception and how to 'read' an artwork

**Forensic:** Students learn about art's origins, and how to find out more about something you see.

**Viewing Public Art:** Students learn about how public artworks are placed and viewed.

## Resources:

### Inglewood Public Artworks:

*The History of Transportation*, Helen Lundeberg 1940 Location: Grevillea Art Park

*Culture Fusion*, Richard Wyatt + Ricardo Duffy 2002 Location: Locust St. Parking Garage

*Iconic Abstractions*, Jody Zellen 2014 Location: Imperial-Crenshaw Library

*Pathways to Success*, Chris Mercier, Adwin David Brown + Rogers Park youth 2014

Location: Rogers Park Community Center

### Supplemental Materials:

The History of Transportation PDF:

[http://inglewoodpublicart.org/pdf/About\\_The\\_History\\_of\\_Transportation.pdf](http://inglewoodpublicart.org/pdf/About_The_History_of_Transportation.pdf)

Podcasts: Rosa Lowinger: [http://inglewoodpublicart.org/History\\_of\\_Transportation.html](http://inglewoodpublicart.org/History_of_Transportation.html)

Chris Mercier link to interview

## Background:

The City of Inglewood supports the creation of art and the work of living artists by asking them to create artworks for the City. Some of Inglewood's public art was made 90 years ago, other artworks were made in this decade. Under the leadership of the Mayor and City Council, the City made a policy in 2004 to encourage the creation of new art in public spaces to reflect today's city.

Some professional artists create public art by using a public space as their art studio. This is a technique standard for painting murals. Other artists create their artwork offsite, working with special artisans called fabricators. They are on site for a short time to install the public artwork. Another way to create public art is to ask community members, including teens and youth, to help design the form and content of public art. Then the professional artist works with the artisans and the city to realize the community public art. All these processes are seen in our public art.

*The History of Transportation* mural was designed to celebrate the importance of roads. The artist explored the remarkable changes in transportation on a large wall. Her design used sixty heavy

panels. It was made by helpers who carefully placed tiny stones on boards to make each panel. An engineer helped design the curved wall to display this unusually long artwork.

*Iconic Abstractions* is a public artwork celebrating Inglewood's architecture. The artist photographed some of Inglewood great buildings then made those images into silhouettes. She mirrored each image on a computer to create unique shapes designed to fit on the arches of the Library roof. Helpers with lasers cut her shapes in stainless steel. The artist's team hung the steel on the building.

*Culture Fusion*, a mural celebrating Inglewood's diversity, was made by two artists who collaborated. One artist worked in his ceramic studio, creating the unique tiles for the faces in the mural. One artist worked on site, painting the three story wall with cultural symbols. The artists' design celebrates cultures and communities. The mural shows portraits of one artist's daughter and father.

*Pathways to Success* is a '3-d mural' celebrating Inglewood youth and their choices. It was created by two artists who collaborated with twenty youth on the design and content for the public art in architecture. Worked together over a summer, they developed three proposals that youth presented to the Arts Commission. One design was chosen and everyone worked together to realize the art.

### **Classroom Applications:**

The teacher does not have to be the expert

The teacher has students to "read" public art in its context; students share what is seen

Teacher helps students to begin research on public space and public conversations

### **Open Ended Questions for Educators:**

What's going on in this artwork? What do you see that makes you say that?

What more can we find?

### **Reading Public Art (two to four artworks may be discussed)**

Show the students two to four artworks (in person or in a digital presentation).

Public art is an artist's responses to time and place. What story is each artwork telling?

Does seeing art outside affect what you see?

Do you think these artworks are valuable? If they are, why would we have them in public?

### **Specific Questions for Teachers:**

#### Visual Research through Public Art

Each artwork's plaque that shows the year it was completed. One was done in 1940; one in 2002, and two in 2014. Does art reflect the year it was completed? How would you tell?

What are the details in each work? Why do you think the artist chose these details?

Each artwork has a unique color palette. Does color affect your response to the art?

Why is the artwork in this particular public place? Can place add meaning to public artwork?

#### History of Transportation, Helen Lundeberg

The artist shows the story of transportation, the city, and people of the time.

Walk along the wall from right to left. Does walking along this monumental artwork help to experience the passing of time or history?

Would a work this large on your house? Does the artwork need a big, open space to be seen?

Iconic Abstractions, Jody Zellen

Do you recognize the buildings in the artwork? Do you think any are iconic?

'Abstraction' means a concept based on specific examples or experiences. Is this art 'abstract'?

Do you think architecture can inspire art? Can architecture be considered art?

Culture Fusion, Richard Wyatt and Ricardo Duffy

The title of this artwork is important to the artists. Do you think it adds to the visual art?

Looking at the mural, do you see any symbols you recognize? Where have you seen the symbols?

This artwork was designed for the front entrance of a parking garage. Can cars contribute to culture fusion in a city? What is culture and who makes it?

Pathways to Success, Chris Mercier, Adwin David Brown and Roger Park Youth

In the mural each line is unique in color, angle and shape. Do these seem like pathways?

Flower-like medallions at the end of each line sit away from the wall and cast shadows when the sun is shining. Why would the team use text in their visual art?

Look at the red and silver square in the upper right corner of the artwork. Knowing youth helped make this artwork, how would you interpret this area?



History of Transportation, Helen Lundeberg



Culture Fusion, Richard Wyatt + Ricardo Duffy



Pathways to Success, Chris Mercier,  
Adwin David Brown, Rogers Park youth



Iconic Abstraction, Jody Zellen