GOING TO THE OLYMPICS

Olympic City: Los Angeles
Country: United States
Edition of the Games:
1932 and 1984 Olympic Summer Games

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Permanent
Locals & Visitors
•
•

WHEN
FOR WHO

www.muralconservancy.org/
WEB

Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles

To mark the hosting of the Summer Olympic Games in 1984, the city of Los Angeles decided to create ten painted murals along the two main highways leading up to the Olympic stadium. This was part of the beginning of a larger artistic movement in Los Angeles. This movement grew quickly to become responsible for the creation of a huge number of similar murals in every corner of the City.

Over the years, many of the murals have fallen into significant disrepair. Rogue artists began to tag unsanctioned graffiti on top of the existing artwork. Many murals were completely covered as a result, resulting in a significant artistic loss for the city.

These developments led to the founding of the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles (MCLA). The MCLA is a non-profit organisation whose mission is to restore, preserve and document the painted murals that are located at various points around the City. The organisation is composed of city and state officials, artists, public art advocates and restoration specialists.

The MCLA currently operates a restoration project, initially launched to help restore the City's various murals, with a specific focus on those created for the 1984 Olympics. The project rapidly expanded to other murals in the city and as of today, they have restored and documented hundreds of murals in the greater Los Angeles area.

The success of the MCLA has led to the extensions of their work in the City. The organisation recently collaborated with the organisers of the Special Olympic Games, which took place in Los Angeles in 2015. Three new murals were sanctioned to celebrate the Special Olympic Games while simultaneously commemorating the 1984 Games.

The association has also become increasingly active within local communities, organising various arts workshops in different neighbourhoods throughout the City. This helps to generate public interest and involvement in the creation, maintenance and preservation of the City's mural artwork.
OBJECTIVES

Celebrate Olympism and its values

The narrative backdrop of the Olympic connection with the programme has enabled the City to raise more awareness among its citizens about its projects. This has been particularly important in informing citizens about the hosting of the Special Olympic Games for which three brand new murals were commissioned. Similarly, the Olympic link has been crucial in generating awareness amongst the local population about the educational artistic courses offered by the MCLA. The original murals created in 1984 have inspired many other artistic works that have been developed since to cover similar Olympic themes. The fact that the City’s artists are still influenced by what happened during the Games over 30 years previously are a testimony to the power of the Olympic Spirit.

Promote social and constructive behaviour

Much of the MCLA programme takes place in disadvantaged communities. The creation and restoration of murals in these areas improves the visual landscape of the neighbourhood as well as dispelling the notion within these communities that nobody cares for them. The local population is heavily involved in the project and this helps to engage these citizens, bringing together people from across different backgrounds under a common goal. The initiative brings a renewed air of positivity and harmony to these disadvantaged neighbourhoods, uniting the community under a shared environment of friendship and respect.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Internal & External Stakeholders

City of Los Angeles planning officials
Local artists
Public art advocates
State officials
Local art restoration specialists

Finance and Cost

The MCLA project is a joint venture and the costs are met through a combination of funding from public sources such as the city, as well as via donations from private sources.

2013 restoration was made possible by donations from the Department of Cultural Affairs, Wells Fargo foundation and Ralph M Parsons Foundation.
The typical cost runs from $75,000 to $300,000 per mural.

Use of the Olympic Brand

The Olympic Murals depict broader themes connected with sport and Olympic movement as well as actual scenes related to the Olympic Games themselves. As a result, many of them strongly display or make reference to the Olympic Rings, using them to frame the positive message of Olympism and the power of sport.

Human Resources and Time

The Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles (MCLA) is a non-profit organization which has the capacity to consult and arrange for the creation of murals worldwide. They have the depth of knowledge and years of experience to create art installations. Some of the noted muralists that work with the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles include Kent Twitchell, perhaps the most experienced muralist worldwide.

The 2015 Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles, in conjunction with MCLA and sponsored by Toyota, contracted with MCLA to create and maintain three legacy murals in prominent locations throughout Los Angeles. MCLA has the track record to create, maintain and restore murals with the highest standards and in a cost efficient manner.

Although each project has its own unique design parameters, including cost, the entire process for creating a legacy mural takes a minimum of three months with many averaging at least 9 months.

EVALUATION

Evaluating an artistic project always includes a more subjective component that makes measurement of the results less easy.

Evaluation is based on the number of murals restored. Not only the murals dedicated to the Olympics are concerned. Success includes the spread of the restoration initiative to murals all over the city and beyond the 1984 Olympic ones.

Growing ownership of the local population on this visible and free testimony from the past also contributes to assess the success of the project.

The acceleration of the identification, preservation and restoration processes of the murals also show that the people in charge of the project have improved skills and efficiency.

KEY CHALLENGES

Selecting the targeted spaces

For the newly commissioned Special Olympics murals, the MCLA originally anticipated that there would be no major challenges in securing their preferred mural sites and finalising arrangements with the relevant property owners. In the end, it took significantly longer than expected to find and secure the walls that matched the desired criteria. This was a direct result of the preferred sites needing to be close to the Special Olympic venues and having optimum visibility. It also took
longer than planned to finalise the necessary documentation and to sign the relevant agreements with owners of the properties in question.

This challenge eased as the project aged and grew. The more sites were secured the more skilled the organisers became in finding and finalising them. Similarly, the more agreements that were reached with owners, the easier it was to demonstrate the benefits associated with having the murals in the area.

**Working with the artists**

The MCLA encountered some issues with many of the artists that were initially selected to contribute to the projects. Some artists were not capable of working to the agreed standard and many had to be replaced in the middle of the work being performed. Artists can be very protective of their concepts and designs and trying to adapt these to conditions such as timelines, cost or other factors can generate blockages and barriers.

The MCLA quickly realised that in such instances, it was often easier to drop the existing artist and replace them with a new artist and new concept that would suit the prevailing circumstances. This was usually amicably accepted by both the organisers and the artists in question who prefer not to compromise on their original concept and vision.

**KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Remain flexible**

Given the unforeseen challenges faced by the MCLA, the organisation has had to adapt to numerous new situations over the course of the project thus far. These challenges were far greater than expected and they underlined the importance of staying as nimble and flexible as possible at every stage of the project. The MCLA now regards this flexibility as essential in the completion of all future projects. They devote more time for the initiation phase of their projects and have become more aware that unanticipated time delays are often a reality. They have also moved to allocate a larger portion of the budget for the initiation phase to reflect the fact that many unforeseen issues occur at this point.

**Take advantage of marketing opportunities**

The MCLA works with an expert marketing team to help with the communication of their various projects. The Association members worked closely with this unit and remained heavily involved in the different communication activities driven by the team. This helped to generate significant learning outcomes for many of the MCLA’s own members. Experience in the scheduling of communications and the media, the channels selected and the use of social media, for example has been generated from this partnership than can be carried forward within the MCLA.
CONTACT

Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles
info@muralconservancy.org
T+1 (213) 291-6900

http://www.muralconservancy.org/