
**Joint
Committee
on the Arts
Tour**

**Speaker Emeritus Anthony
Rendon, Chair
Senator Ben Allen, Vice
Chair**

**May
10,
2024**

**Coachella
Valley**

Executive Summary

On Friday, May 10, the Joint Committee on the Arts convened a tour in the Coachella Valley in Riverside County. Focusing on four different artistic installations and businesses across three different cities, the attending committee members met with local experts and learned about the biggest opportunities and challenges facing the artistic communities of Coachella Valley.



Shady Lane Mural - Coachella, CA

Spanning more than 1,000 feet, the Shady Lane Mural features different segments, focusing on different historical events and issue areas impacting the local Mexican-American community in Coachella. The mural was organized and curated by Culturas Music & Arts, led by local community leaders Ruben Gonzalez and Yaya Ortiz.



“Coachella Walls” - Coachella, CA

Decorating more than a dozen buildings in downtown Coachella are the “Coachella Walls”, a series of murals designed to showcase beautify the community, create civic pride, and stimulate the local economy. Many of the murals focus on the lives and challenges of farmworkers. The above mural was painted by Armando Lerma and Carlos Ramirez of the Date Farmers Collective on the side of Casa de Trabajador, where Cesar Chavez spent time helping organize farmworkers in the 1960’s. The mural focuses on the grape boycott of 1965.



Cabot's Pueblo Museum - Desert Hot Springs, CA

On the hillside of Desert Hot Springs sits a remarkable building: Cabot's Pueblo Museum, the home and life's work of Cabot Yerxa.

Yerxa, who re-discovered the famous hot and cold springs that would give the city its name, was an artist and environmentalist. His beautiful and eclectic home, made almost exclusively from environmentally-friendly reclaimed materials, was inspired by Hopi buildings. Yerxa was also a dedicated artist and art collector, who filled his home with Native American art, as well as his own personal works.



Manfredi Studios - Cathedral City, CA

Tucked into an industrial building in Cathedral City is Manfredi Studios, the workspace and gallery of Kim Manfredi. Manfredi, who paints abstract art inspired by space and place, is also the founder of Desert Open Studios, an annual event designed to showcase the work of artists across the Coachella Valley. What started as an event featuring a handful of artists in 2020 has swelled to feature more than 160 unique artists across the Valley. The event presents a unique opportunity for artists, who may work privately, to open their homes and studios to the public and connect with potentially new clients.

Manfredi is one of several artists who are claiming workspaces in traditionally industrial parts of town. Manfredi says by offering reduced rents to artists, landlords have been able to diversify their tenancies and promote the artistic community.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



01

THE DESERT ENVIRONMENT PRESENTS UNIQUE CHALLENGES

The extreme daytime temperatures experienced regularly across the Coachella Valley present challenges to creating and displaying art.

At the Shady Lane Mural in Coachella, Gonzalez and Ortiz of Culturas Music & Art shared that it's logistically challenging to find artists willing to work outdoors on the mural in the extreme desert heat.

Additionally, artists need to use specialty paints and materials designed to withstand extreme temperatures, which can be more expensive.

Irene Rodriguez, Executive Director of Cabot's Pueblo Museum, shared that during the museum's annual summer hours, between May and September, the museum must close at 1pm. The nature of the museum is such that air conditioning cannot be installed, leading to extreme afternoon temperatures. This presents a challenge in attracting visitors.

The summer's extreme temperatures also can preclude artists from summertime events, such as outdoor art displays. The large bulk of artistic events for artists, therefore, are confined to the winter season.

02

SMALL INVESTMENTS HAVE A BIG IMPACT

Many of the outstanding works of art in the Coachella Valley did not require a substantial investment, yet they provide substantial value to the communities surrounding them.

The Shady Lane mural features dozens of local artists, all of whom volunteered for the project. The Coachella Cultural and Arts Commission, has provided recent funding of roughly \$13,000 to touch up and update the mural. This funding was administered

through Culturas Music & Art, the nonprofit organizer of the project.

The Coachella Walls project came into being with an investment of \$25,000 from the city of Coachella. Artistic organizers in the community say in return for the city's investment, local businesses in the downtown area have received an economic boost from those visiting the city to look at the walls. This is in addition to the funding the artists received for their work.

These relatively small investments are a reminder that even in lean budget years, there are opportunities for small investments that beautify communities and boost the economy.

03

BRINGING ARTISTS TOGETHER BRINGS SUCCESS

Nearly all the successful artistic efforts the Joint Arts Committee studied on the tour were the result of bringing artists together.

According to Kim Manfredi of Manfredi Studios, before the existence of Desert Open Studios, artists would work in silos, rarely venturing out beyond their own community. Many artists, who often work out of their own homes, may struggle to generate clientele on their own.

By coming together to showcase their work in the annual studio tour, they provided a new opportunity for commercial and critical success for all who participated.

At the Shady Lane Mural in Coachella, the work of individual artists came together in one cohesive vision, creating something more powerful than the sum of its parts.

The Coachella Walls project was another opportunity where different artists with different visions were able to contribute to a project bigger and more powerful than their own murals.

When cities and organizations create opportunities to bring artists together, they provide greater potential for success.