

A Senior Scholar Adventure

Art enthusiast Walter Meyer has taken over 10 UCLA classes as a Senior Scholar, primarily in the art history department. This summer, he used his knowledge and interest in street art to facilitate a unique cross-continent artistic exchange. Having lived in Istanbul from 2008 to 2010, Meyer returned to Turkey in November/December 2014. During this visit, he took a Street Art walking tour and “was amazed by the veritable explosion in street art that has occurred” since last there in 2010.

Inspired by the growing appreciation of street art, Meyer wrote a proposal to the sponsors of the Mural Istanbul Festival (Kadikoy Municipality) for an artist exchange between Istanbul and Los Angeles. After receiving approval from the Municipality, and the Turkish Consul General in Los Angeles, his idea came to fruition. Two Los Angeles street artists, Levi Ponce and Kristy Sandoval, traveled to Istanbul in July to collaborate on a 52' x 16' wall for the 2015 Mural Istanbul Festival. In the festival's four-year history, they were the first Americans to participate, with Sandoval being the first female artist to participate.

Ponce and Sandoval's mural is located in the Kadikoy district (on the Asian side of Istanbul), and will be on display until fall 2016. Levi Ponce has a degree in Animation from California State University Northridge, and has been featured on CNN and BBC segments. Kristy Sandoval has a fine arts degree from San Francisco's Academy of Art University. While in Istanbul, Meyer also helped arrange for Sandoval to paint a second mural at Child Friendly Space, a center for Syrian refugee children. With the help of half a dozen Syrian girls, Sandoval painted Malala, a Pakistani activist for female education, who was shot by a Taliban gunman for wanting an education but survived.



To complete the exchange, Istanbul street artists and students at Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts, Esk Reyn (Mete Cam) and Wicx (Can Berk El), came to Los Angeles in August 2015. They painted a 45' by 15' mural on “Mural Mile” on Van Nuys Boulevard in Pacoima. Their mural is the first by foreign artists on this stretch and can be seen on mural tours led by the Museum of the San Fernando Valley.



One of the goals of UCLA Longevity Center's Senior Scholars Program is to encourage life-long learning and mental stimulation to help people live better and longer. Walter Meyer's transnational art exchange project is one of many examples of the energy, knowledge and talent of Senior Scholars. As the program enters its 20th year, the Longevity Center is excited by the rich life experiences that more and more Scholars are bringing to campus.