

2013 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Chicano Park Mural Restoration Project



One of the twenty murals that are featured at Chicano Park in San Diego

The Chicano Park Mural Restoration Project was an opportunity to preserve and enhance twenty outdoor murals that are recognized at the local, state, and national levels as historical, cultural, and socio-political public art. The murals are painted on the pillars, approach ramps, and abutments of the iconic San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge. Chicano Park is distinguished by these 40-year-old murals that depict colorful images of pre-Columbian gods, botanical elements, animal imagery, revolutionary struggles, and spiritual symbolism. The murals, and the effort to preserve them, reflect the life of the community that surrounds them, and the community members' determination to claim the space beneath the bridge as a much-valued neighborhood park.

Because it was not the typical highway project managed by the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), the mural restoration project required innovative thinking and significant community involvement. CalTrans District 11 partnered with the Chicano Park Steering Committee to produce a technical manual to help identify the extent and methods of restoration required for each mural.

The project was funded by a Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA) grant that required the restoration be completed by the original artists or their designees. Ghirardelli Associates contracted with CalTrans to locate the original artists and prepared agreements with them allowing the restoration to begin. The project began in June of 2011 and was successfully completed in August of 2012. Only four or five murals were undergoing restoration at any one time, which allowed the park to remain open throughout the project.

The restoration was a great success. The artists were elated to have the opportunity to restore, and in some cases, complete the work they started decades before. The collaboration between state, business, and local entities brought about a result for which all could feel proud. Today, the murals are once again the focal point of the park, and a testament to the community's history and spirit.

Learn about the history of Chicano Park and view images of all twenty murals:

<http://www.chicanoparksandiego.com/>