

WE Mural Artist Statements

Andrés Guzmán + Xee Reiter

Andrés is a visual artist and designer born in Lima, Peru and based in Mpls since 2006. He works in a wide range of multimedia adapting to whatever project may come his way. He takes inspiration from his colorful native culture, spirit worlds and nostalgic dreamscapes.

@andresitoguzman

Xee is a first generation Hmong American art-journaling visual storyteller in watercolor, pen and ink. From portraiture to children's book illustrations, murals, typography and calligraphy, Xee whimsically inserts her cultural influences in her creations.

@xeereiter

Title: **Untitled**

This work combines the work and styles of both Andrés and Xee, exploring the life cycle and journey beyond a wider awareness when read from the left to right side. It begins with motherhood and birth, continuing with blooming flowers and a mature figure symbolizing new seasons and transformations into new life chapters. A tattooed hand suggests lived experience. A character with three eyes with crowned leaves alludes to a heightened global awareness and appreciation for mother nature. This leads into a dreamy forest of peace and serenity. The lush woods morph into a full dream state where a figure calmly drifts. At the right we are in the presence of a welcoming hand and dream entity enveloped in the cosmos. She mirrors the sacred mother on the left.

City Mischief, designed by Thomasina Topbear, featuring Tom Jay

Thomasina is a self-taught Santee Dakota & Oglala Lakota muralist, member of international all female crew Few & Far Women and helped found City Mischief Murals. She combines her Indigenous culture and graffiti influences to express community, social justice, culture, feminism and togetherness.

@tomierae

Minneapolis artist Tom Janssen is of Guatemalan and Mayan descent. Born in Guatemala City, he came to the US at six months old. Tom was first introduced to spray paint and graffiti culture at age 11 and hasn't stopped his craft since. Now a professional artist, he hopes to inspire young adults to follow their own dreams.

@teejay.art

Title: **The Strength of Mní**

I created this design as a City Mischief project, it features at the forefront Sunflowers and Monarch

Butterflies both are Indigenous to these lands. In the background you have a river going through straight edged shapes representing land. The Sunflowers represent resilience, strength and endurance while the Monarch represents transformation, change and balance. The stream of blue represents the powerful sacredness of water which is found in all of us. It pushes through and shapes rock, while doing so it gives life to all things.

Martzia Thometz

Martzia is a self-taught visual and graffiti artist making her mark since 2008. Her trademark imagery seeks to exist between the elemental contrasts of “soft” and “hard”, showing adaptability and personal evolution in an uncertain world, and creating hope for a better tomorrow for all.

@prettyhard

Title: **Here to help**

This mural features key symbols that convey various meanings throughout, inspired by people, nature and the movements they represent. Monarchs are prominent in this region and represent transformative justice and migration. Chains represent challenges we face, small and systemic. The breaks in the chains, and the butterflies flying freely outside of the chain, represent breaking those cycles of everyday challenges. The ever so delicately floating hands represent metaphors of joining hands, lending a hand, and women’s work as the backbone of everything that’s tirelessly possible for the greater good of communities and society.

Marlena Myles

Marlena is a self-taught Native American (Spirit Lake Dakota/Mohegan/Muscogee) artist, and publisher/founder of Wiyounkihipi (We Are Capable) Productions. Her art brings modernity to indigenous history, languages and oral traditions, teaching Minnesotans of all backgrounds the indigenous history of this place we call home.

@mylesdesigns

Title: **Kapemni (mirroring)**

The center of this mural features a tipi and its reflection above, creating the Dakota symbol of two reflected triangles known as Kapemni (mirroring) which represents the philosophy that what happens below is reflected above and vice versa.

According to Dakota star knowledge, We believe We come from the stars. Bdote, the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers near Bloomington, is the place of origin for Dakota people and where the Kapemni (mirroring) is strongest. Our ancestors were often buried along the Mississippi River -- which is reflected above us as the Milky Way, the spirit road that we travel upon in the afterlife according to Dakota beliefs. In Bloomington, Mound Springs Park features a number of such mounds. More of these mounds were destroyed in recent times such as the Lincoln Burial Mounds (destroyed for the construction of the Bloomington Central Station) nearby this mural.

As a metaphor, Bdoté can also represent the meeting of people and the horizontal colors along the sides represents all the people today who come together to create our current society here in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Reggie LeFlore

Reggie is a visual artist using aerosol and acrylic paint in the styles of Street Art culture, illustration, and graphic design. He creates portraiture of “everyday people,” vibrant in colors to capture the energy and spirit of individual and collective stories in varying styles, scales and surfaces.

@ral86

Title: **Oshun’s Existence**

This mural serves to pay homage to my discovery of the multidimensional deities of West African folklore and mythology, especially as it relates to the knowledge of my West African heritage and its diaspora across the world. Of these deities, which are more commonly referred to as Orishas, the one depicted in this mural references the river goddess known as Oshun.

In various stories that span across the Yoruba people in West Africa, Oshun is regarded as a nurturer and protector of humanity and the lands that she inhabits. She’s known to exist as a human, but she also exists within nature - flowing through rivers, lakes, the rain, and even the vast ocean itself. As a member of the African diaspora that exists within these colonized spaces of Minnesota, known to many as the Land of 10,000 Lakes, my goal with this mural is to connect this story to both the vast bodies of water that surround us, and the presence of the West African river goddess that exists within them.

Ua Si Creative

Stitched together, Christina Vang’s “Motherland”, Teeko Yang’s “Plane and Sight”, and Ka Oskar Ly’s “WE Are Infinite”, the murals create a tribute to their past, present, and futures.

Christina Vang

Christina is a Hmong American artist, designer and muralist. Through her work she aims to capture the vibrancy, curiosity, and energy of culture and community. @christinavang

Title: **Motherland**

Motherland depicts the connection of body and land. When Hmong babies are born, the placenta is buried under the earth within the home. The Hmong believe that after death, the soul returns to the place of birth to retrieve the placental jacket before journeying to the sky and the afterlife.

Motherland represents a longing for home and the broken tether of the soul and earth. Hundreds of thousands of Hmong were displaced after the Vietnam War, severing the connection to their ancestral home. At the center is Vang’s mother with the sunrise forming her stomach, symbolizing the birth of new generations that carry this history, trauma, hopes and dreams. Surrounding the mother are mountains that represent Phou Pha Thi, a sacred mountain in Laos, where Vang’s father

was born.

Ka Oskar Ly

Ka is a queer Hmong American immigrant multidisciplinary artist and cultural producer. From fashion to murals, they create works, installations, and experiences that evoke cultural innovation to seed community futures.

@kaoskarlyart

Title: ***WE are infinite.***

I've witnessed my existence denied. Particularly here, facing across the street was the immigration office (now at Fort Snelling) that summoned me for most of life, reinforcing I am not from here. Being queer, I live at the margins of my community.

I've witnessed my existence as power. The truth is that this is the land I am on. I can only be myself. My mentors remind me, "*we only know what we know*". Native relatives teach us, "*how may we be good relatives to one another*"? Blood or not, how may we exist with each other? Begin by learning the stories of peoples who have been erased through and through.

What started as an inquiry to community asking "*how do you identify? how do you rep your ancestral culture as 'your crown'?*" inspired an ongoing reflection illustrated. Featured in spirited line drawings are community individuals, each pridefully adorning their ancestral cultures and beliefs into futuristic eternity. "*WE are our ancestors' wildest dreams.*" We are the descendants of those who came before us. We may not all know our ancestors who led us here. May *WE* be inspired to reach for our ancestors as we'll be ancestors to future generations. For that, "*WE are infinite*" (J Ching).

Teeko Yang

Teeko is a first generation Hmong American. She practices photography and spends her time making jewelry.

@teekoism

Title: **Plane of Sight**

Plane of Sight reimagines the experiences of Teeko's family in Laos during the Vietnam War. Her family witnessed the first site of a US military C-47 Skytrain aircraft that was used in a variety of missions including ground attacks, reconnaissance, and psychological warfare. Juxtaposing her family's trauma associated with the aircrafts, Teeko places two small children pointing into the sky interacting with the constant sights of planes over the South Loop, Bloomington.

The two children represent her parents and their experiences. The C-47 Skytrain aircrafts were seen throughout Laos, and Southeast Asia. They are a stark reminder of a dark time in history.

Years later, Teeko's family was brought to America through these "machines that flew." Her family first landed in Bloomington, MN to start a new life. These planes are now a constant reminder of trauma, hope, freedom, and dreams.