Introduction to Mural Art
The Mural Art Learning Institute: Level 1

2018 Program Report
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1. Overview

Introduction to Mural Art (IMA) is a free visual art learning program for all skills levels, and all ages over 14. Professional artists lead a series of six sessions connecting basic art and design techniques to the practical skills of mural making, empowering community members to participate in public wall art projects.

Mural Routes held three IMA programs in 2018:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMA: Community Centre 55</td>
<td>97 Main St, Toronto, ON M4E 2V6</td>
<td>February 1 - March 8, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMA: Chinese Cultural Centre</td>
<td>5183 Sheppard Ave E, Scarborough, ON M1B 5Z5</td>
<td>March 26 - May 14, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>of Greater Toronto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IMA: East End Arts</td>
<td>St. Matthew's Clubhouse 450 Broadview Ave,</td>
<td>September 19 - October 24,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Toronto, ON M4K 2N3</td>
<td>2018</td>
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2. Program Goals

As the first level of MURALi, Introduction to Mural Art is intended to be an accessible program for anyone interested in learning about mural art. Our goals include:

- Teach basic mural art skills
- Empower community members to participate in public art projects
- Encourage networking between public artists and art enthusiasts
- Make connections with artists who could benefit from Mural Routes programs/services
- Encourage these people to participate in other MURALi programs

The program covers basic skills such as:

- Drawing and painting techniques
- Colour theory and colour mixing
- Enlarging designs
- Creating and working with stencils
- Materials for mural painting
- Collaborative design

In some cases, the program is linked to an opportunity for participants to work in groups on large-scale collaborative mural projects.
3. **IMA: Community Centre 55**

**Date:** February 1 – March 8, 2018 (Thursdays, 5:30pm – 8:30 pm)

**Location:** Community Centre 55 (East End) 97 Main St, Toronto

**Number of Registered Participants:** 25

**Instructors:** Rob Matejka and Anya Mieleniczek

**Context:** This session was programmed in partnership with Community Centre 55 and provided hands-on opportunities for our MURALi participants to engage in the actual production of a mural. In line with Community Centre 55’s past programming around mural production and graffiti transformation for youth, this program allowed community members to build the necessary confidence to participate in public art projects in their communities.

The program wrapped up with the installation of an indoor mural in the community centre, produced by participants with the guidance of lead instructor Rob Matejka. In addition, three participants of this IMA program were accepted into and completed the Mural Art Career Development program.

*Intro to Mural Art at CC55: This [google map](#) shows the address of each student, showing the reach as far west as Milton and Oakville.*

**Participant Feedback:**

Feedback from this cohort of students was particularly vibrant. Participants appreciated having the ability to brainstorm and come up with ideas in groups, as well
as getting hands-on experience with materials while being encouraged by the instructors.

Some voiced that they would enjoy a longer program, 8-week rather than 6-week. Others expressed preference for the classes in general to be longer in order to accommodate more painting time. Upon completing IMA, students said that they would continue their involvement in murals by working in administration, as artists, as volunteers, and as Mural Art Career Development students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants were asked what they enjoyed most about the program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating and skill sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outcomes:
In total, 25 students participated in this round of IMA, with 16 progressing to the end of the program and completing their collaborative panels and presentation. In addition, the students participated in the completion of an indoor mural at Community Centre 55. This round of IMA brought mural art education to the east end of Toronto.

In the Participants words...
I was amazed to see what a beautiful, voluminous mural a group of relatively inexperienced strangers created over the course of a few short weeks, thanks to the patient and very knowledgeable tutelage of Rob and Anya.

When I learned such a positive experience was made possible by the Ontario Trillium Foundation my first thought was, 'The system works!' As a former public servant and as a citizen, I think this is an excellent use of Trillium funds to build social capital and create public art that should continue.

Linda Ambos
Looking Ahead:

Overall, the students were quite reflective on their exit survey. Based on the student’s suggestions we will consider the following for future IMA programs:

- Longer program run time
- More variety of materials
- Hard-copy class notes for future referencing
- Alternative media (e.g. aerosol)
- Enforcing a scent-free working environment

4. **IMA: Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto (CCCGT)**

**Date:** March 26 - May 14, 2018

**Location:** CCCGT (North Scarborough), 5183 Sheppard Ave E, Scarborough,

**Number of Registered Participants:** 25

**Instructors:** Rob Matejka and Anya Mielniczek

**Context:** This session was programmed in partnership with the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto. This round of IMA provided hands-on opportunities for our MURALi
participants to engage in the actual production of a mural later on during June and July. The creation of this large outdoor mural on the CCCGT building was part of the Centre’s 20th anniversary year. The project was led by Rob Matejka and supported by a StreetARToronto Partnership grant.

Participant feedback:

The group of participants in this iteration of Introduction to Mural Art at the Chinese Cultural Centre largely self-identified as emerging creators and enthusiasts. Several participants communicated their interest in continuing their education in mural art through Mural Routes training programs such as the Wall Art Learning Series and Mural Art Career Development in the future.

Following the completion of the classes, several participants asked about how they can connect with other mural artists as well as past participants of Introduction to Mural Art. They displayed a keen interest to network with other artists and expand upon their experience in this program and most of the participants stated that collaborative working was greatly beneficial to the learning process.

Of the 11 Participants surveyed on the last day of class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learned new information about mural art:</th>
<th>Achieved their goals in the program:</th>
<th>Increased appreciation for mural art:</th>
<th>Felt that the program met their expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking Ahead:

Although this location is far from central Toronto, 9 out of the 11 students surveyed said that the location was convenient for them. This indicates that even far outside the downtown core, residents are interested in a weekly class centered around mural education. Additionally, executing IMA at a specific multicultural hub seems to be successful. Many participants who may only go to a cultural hub of their heritage would otherwise not have access to mural art education.

Outcomes:

Following the IMA program, lead instructor Rob Matejka took direction from the participant’s collaborative design inspiration in combination with community and Chinese Cultural Centre’s feedback to create a fully realized design for a large scale mural on panels. Community members were also invited to participate in painting this mural. The mural unveiling was planned in order to coincide with the Chinese Cultural Centre’s Scarborough Summerfest, July 13, 14 and the Youth Symposium on Saturday, July 15th, 2018.

One goal of the resulting artwork aimed to give a sense of pride and accomplishment to the community members involved in its creation and to contribute in communicating that the Chinese Cultural Centre is a multicultural space open to people of all backgrounds. The group of apprentice artists and volunteers worked in the months of May to mid-July and celebrated the completion of the mural on July 15th, 2018, a day chosen to coincide with the Chinese Cultural Centre’s festival and Youth Symposium. The theme and design was directed by the curatorial vision of the project as outlined by the Chinese Cultural Centre, which aims to celebrate “multiculturalism, coming together, sharing and harmony.”
5. IMA: East End Arts

**Date:** September 19 - October 24, 2018  

**Location:** East End Arts, St, Matthew’s Clubhouse, 450 Broadview Ave  

**Number of Registered Participants:** 25  

**Instructors:** Rob Matejka and Anya Mielniczek  

**Context:** This session was programmed in partnership with East End Arts in their new space, St Matthew’s clubhouse. This IMA marked the beginning of an ongoing reciprocal partnership with East End Arts and upon completion of the program, participants were invited to join past MURALi students in an end-of-season networking event held at the clubhouse.

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**Participant Feedback:**

The group of participants in this round of IMA were of diverse artistic and career backgrounds. They included traditional artists looking to transition into doing mural work, younger participants looking to part-take in a creative after school program, administrators looking to learn the practical side of mural making, and enthusiasts looking to have a creative outlet and improve their artistic skills. Participants generally enjoyed the group “design challenge” which asked them to design a mural proposal based on randomized themes. Furthermore, the students reflected a keen interest in...
the painting portion of the class, which was the culmination activity which required working in groups and painting a panel of their own design. As with previous IMAs which are geared towards beginners but open to all, there was varying levels of need with regard to basic artistic skills. Because of this, some preferred more time spent on colour theory and brush skills in general rather than specific to mural making. All those surveyed said that they plan to continue their involvement in mural arts in some way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of the 8 Participants surveyed on the last day of class:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learned new information about mural art:</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When asked what they enjoyed most about the class:

In the Participants words...

“Better understanding of mural art”

“I loved it! So well organized + excellent instructors.”

“I love meeting different people and learning different painting techniques.”

“Combination of lessons plus hands on, especially working on our projects.”

“Good basics, lots of material available, teacher is very available.”

“The first mural exercise with the location, theme, was awesome.”

Looking Ahead:

The participants in this group enjoyed the space that St. Matthew’s Clubhouse provided for hands on work. For this group we provided the take-home resources that were suggested in feedback from previous programs. Additionally, a shared Google folder was created for the class where we stored resources, images, and class notes.
Those who could not access the cloud were emailed the files directly in an effort to conserve resources and provide hard-copies only to those who needed it.

Based on the student feedback, it may be useful to have the instructors discuss their career progression in greater detail. Speaking about their biography, how they approach projects, the daily challenges they face, etc. can be useful to beginners. Students also showed interest in learning more basic painting techniques such as colour mixing and working with spray paint. As with most IMA cohorts, they asked for a longer program length. It may be beneficial to run the program longer, although the balance between art education and specifically mural art education is important. Some of the basic drawing and painting techniques can be covered, although IMA’s focus is on mural-specific content.

Outcomes:

East End arts was a very supportive partner and allowed us flexibility in storing materials for the duration of the program. They participated in promoting the workshops to their local stakeholders and agreed to host the end-of-the-program networking event and celebration in November along with past MURALi participants. Out of the 25 registered participants, 11 of them completed the program through to the 6th and final session. The showcase and celebration of student work was combined with the MURALi networking event in November. Upon completion of this round, prospective participants have inquired about dates for future IMA programs.
6. Summary

Introduction to Mural Art has reached a diverse range of neighbourhoods in the GTA throughout its’ three-year run. With minimal mural art education opportunities in the city including the art universities and colleges, it is easy to understand why the program has received the attention of professional artists. This need is particularly evident considering the participants who traveled long distances to attend classes. In 2018, Mural Routes ran a total of 3 IMA programs in various neighbourhoods with 61 total participants. In 3 years of IMA we reached 197 individual participants across the GTA.

In addition to these local classes, resources such as handouts and presentations from the programs continue to be available and easily found on our website and searchable through keywords on Google for those looking for mural production learning. The program has solidified Mural Routes as the leading organization in mural education and resources in the city.

The program has also allowed Mural Routes to create partnerships with community-driven organizations such as various Local Art Service Organizations, community centres, and libraries. These relationships have grown Mural Routes’ overall reach in terms of word-of-mouth for consultation on murals in the city and resulted in separate partnerships for events and individual mural projects with these organizations.

The main challenges encountered with IMA related to different expectations and skill levels from the students. While some students preferred more time spent on learning basic artistic skills, others wanted more professional knowledge from the teachers. Different partners provided certain advantages over others such as larger spaces, easier transit access etc. It is key to the success of each program that Mural Routes adjusted the program to fit the space, neighbourhood, and needs expressed by the students, within our capacity. Following three years of programming, we have gained significant data on what participants expect from mural art education at the community and introductory level.
Appendix A: About the organization

Mural Routes is the only member-based not-for-profit arts service organization in Canada dedicated to the creation, development and promotion of public wall art. Our vision is to inspire the creation of extraordinary public wall art that serves as a catalyst for community building.

The Mural Art Learning Institute (MURALi) is a continuum of training programs in all aspects of mural-making. The Institute brings people with an interest in mural art together, encouraging artists and communities to teach, learn, share, and grow together through mural art.

MURALi Advisory Committee
Allan Bender
Anya Mielniczek
Cristina Delago
Rob Matejka
Susan Filshie

Mural Routes Staff
Tara Dorey
Karin Eaton
Marta Keller-Hernandez
Nazli Nahidi
Kyla Ross
Jackie Santos

IMA Instructors
Anya Mielniczek
Rob Matejka
Appendix B: Acknowledgements

Mural Art Learning Institute is generously funded by an Ontario Trillium Foundation Grow Grant (2016-2018).

An agency of the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is one of Canada's largest granting foundations. With a budget of over $136 million, OTF awards grants to some 1,000 projects every year to build healthy and vibrant Ontario communities. www.otf.ca

Mural Routes would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council.

Mural Routes would like to thank the following partners for their support of Introduction to Mural Art program in 2018:

- Community Centre 55
- Chinese Cultural centre of Greater Toronto
- East End Arts