These Walls Speak!

Jean-Claude Latombe
Since the cave paintings of the late Paleolithic, humans have created murals—paintings, carvings, or engravings on large, hard, and durable surfaces, such as natural rock faces and man-made building surfaces. Today, one may see murals in many old and not-so-old temples, churches, palaces, and government buildings. Recently, they have become an almost ubiquitous sight in the streets of our cities. These works of art illustrate myths, legends, events, and struggles. They may express aspirations, fears, and anger. Often, they also reflect local lifestyles and traditions at the time they were created. They serve various specific purposes, such as propagating religious beliefs and dogma, promoting political and social messages, advertising commercial products, or just displaying beautiful images. But they all take advantage of their large size and high visibility to say something to the passer-by: these walls speak!

This book is a collection of photos of murals I took in multiple countries around the world, featuring an unorthodox mix of eras, styles, techniques, and content. This mix includes sculpted stone walls of the ancient city of Persepolis, the Buddhist temples of Angkor and Borobudur, and the cathedral of Chartres; Greco-Roman mosaics of Zeugma; ancient petroglyphs and geoglyphs in Morocco, the United States, and Chile; wall and ceiling paintings in rock-hewn churches of Tigray; educational murals in rural Ethiopian schools; frescoes in Taoist temples and Himalayan Buddhist monasteries; Tibetan Buddhist paintings in caves of Ladakh; stained-glass windows in the cathedral of Bourges; tiled walls in Portugal; street murals featuring Bruce Lee in San Francisco’s Chinatown; political murals in Mexico and Panama; colorful pre-Columbian frescoes in Mexico; exuberant street paintings in Valparaiso, Chile; and more. The lifespans of these murals are also very different: while the stone walls of Persepolis, Angkor, and Borobudur, and the mosaics of Zeugma have existed for centuries, most contemporary street murals survive at most a few years.

I like all these murals, although often for very different reasons.

Jean-Claude Latombe
Stanford, October 2022

Throughout this book, the years the photos were taken are shown between brackets.

Front cover photo: [2015] Wall fresco in the rock-hewn church of Abreha we Atsbeha, Tigray, Ethiopia. See page 104.
[2019] Mural with no apparent purpose other than decorating an otherwise bland wall, Yanagawa, Kyushu, Japan.
[2018] Wall painting depicting stages of traditional sake production, museum of the Kinryo sake brewery, Kotohira, Japan.
[2016] Kosatsuba (official notice board), Magome, Kiso valley, Japan.
Such boards were used during the Shogunate (Edo period, 1603-1868) to announce new edicts and regulations. The village of Magome was then an important stopover on the old Nakasendo route, which connected Edo (now Tokyo) and Osaka.
[2019] Painting of a horseman on a wood panel in the Zuikozan Kiyomizudera temple, a Buddhist temple of the Tendai sect, near Yasugi City, Japan.
Painting on a wood panel dating from the Meiji period in the Isaniwa Jinja, a Shinto shrine dedicated to the kami (Shinto deity) of warriors, Hachiman, in Matsuyama, Japan. It shows Japanese battleships and foot soldiers engaged in the siege of Port Arthur (1904–1905) during the Russo-Japanese war.
This double page (8–9): [2016] Painting on adjacent sliding doors (fusuma) in the Betsuden, an annex of the Kongobuji temple,
Koyasan, Japan. It features a scene related to the travel to China of Kukai (also known as Kobo Daishi), the founder of Koyasan.
Stucco relief wall in Izumo, Japan. It illustrates the Kunibiki (Land Pulling) legend, recorded in the Izumo Fudoki, a compilation of ancient stories: a local kami finds the land around Izumo too small, looks across the Sea of
Japan, sees land in four different places, pulls it across the sea, and attaches it to Izumo, thus making the region larger. As one can guess, this “land stealing” legend has been the subject of controversy.
Opposite page: [2018] Ceiling of the shoro (bell tower) in the Hanta-ji (Buddhist temple), Matsuyama, Japan. The decoration consists of 24 distinct paintings illustrating various legends and stories (only 12 are fully visible in this picture).

This page: [2016] Dragon drawn on a wood wall in the Chousen-ji (Buddhist temple), Narai, Kiso valley, Japan.
Opposite page: [2018] Wall paintings in the Ishite-ji (Buddhist temple), Matsuyama, Japan.

This page: [2019] Portion of a wall painting in the Gessho-ji (Buddhist temple), Matsue, Japan.
Heads of guardians painted on the adjacent wooden entrance doors of a traditional Fujianese house in Shuitou village, island of Great Kinmen, Taiwan. Common in traditional Fujianese houses and temples.
such guardians, called menshens, are believed to protect these buildings from evil influences and encourage the entry of positive ones. They are often deified generals who lived during the Tang dynasty (616-907).
Opposite page (left): [2017] Painting on a wooden door of the Wufei temple, Tainan, Taiwan. Established in 1683, this temple is dedicated to the five concubines of the last Ming emperor Zhu Shugui.
This page: [2017] Painting on the entrance door of the ancestral temple of the Tsai Family (built in 1770) in the village of Qionglin, island of Great Kinmen, Taiwan.
This temple enshrines a Qing-dynasty general who fought a large fish that was killing people. The general killed the fish, but died during the fight.

This page and opposite page: [2018] Painted wood carvings on the two double doors of the White-Horse General temple, Fugo village, Nangan island, Matsu archipelago, Taiwan.
This temple enshrines a Qing-dynasty general who fought a large fish that was killing people. The general killed the fish, but died during the fight.
Opposite page: [2017] Wall of Supreme Knowledge accessed by a stone bridge, Confucius temple, Taipei, Taiwan. The large circular seal on the wall depicts the Chinese mythical creature Qilin with its four hooves resting on scrolls for cultivated minds.

This page: [2016] Painted plaster relief panels in the old Din Family residence, Lukang, Taiwan.
This page and four next pages:
[2016] Carved stone walls below the Confucius hall of the Wenwu temple, Sun Moon lake, Taiwan.
This page and opposite page:
[2016] Carved stone walls below the Confucius hall of the Wenwu temple, Sun Moon lake, Taiwan.
[2016] Carved stone wall below the Confucius hall of the Wenwu temple, Sun Moon lake, Taiwan.
[2018] Stone carvings in the front wall of the Matsu temple, Jieshou village, Nangan island, Matsu archipelago, Taiwan.
Intricate stone reliefs in the walls of the small Tianhou temple (dedicated to Matsu), Beigan island, Matsu archipelago, Taiwan.
Opposite page: [2018] Engravings on flat stone walls depicting scenes of legends in a temple of Tangqi village, Beigan island, Matsu archipelago, Taiwan.
This page: [2018] Wall painting in a temple of Ren-ai village, Nangan island, Matsu archipelago, Taiwan.
This page and opposite page: [2017] Painted murals with plaster relief components in the Lady Linshui temple, Tainan, Taiwan. Lady Linshui, the Taoist goddess of birth and fertility, is regarded as the protector of women and children.
This page and opposite page: [2017] Wall paintings in the Dalongdong Baoan temple, Taipei, Taiwan.

This temple celebrates Baosheng Dadi, the Taoist god of medicine. Initially built in 1760, it underwent major changes during the first half of the 19th century and a full-scale restoration in 1995. These three paintings were made in 1973 by Pan Li-shui (1914-1995), a renown Taiwanese temple artist. They illustrate ancient Chinese legends and historical events.
Opposite page: [2015] Wall painting in the Longshan temple, Taipei, Taiwan. This temple was built in 1738. As many as 165 Buddhist and Taoist deities are worshiped there, but Guanyin, the highly popular bodhisattva of infinite compassion and mercy in Chinese Buddhism, is the main one.

This page: [2017] Wall painting inside the Pei Chi Pavilion, Lotus pond, Kaohsiung, Taiwan. This temple is dedicated to the Taoist deity Xuan Shan Di, also known by grand honorary names such as “God Emperor of the North Pole” and “Supreme Emperor of the Dark Heave”. 
This page and opposite page: [2017] Other painted walls inside the Pei Chi Pavilion (see previous page), Lotus pond, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.
[2017] Tiled walls in a traditional Fujianese house, island of Great Kinmen, Taiwan.
[2017] Tiled mural in the Juguang tower, island of Great Kinmen, Taiwan. It depicts the Juguang tower in its center and the stone Wentai pagoda in its lower left corner. The tower was built in 1953 in a traditional Chinese style to honor Nationalist soldiers. Erected in 1387, the pagoda served as a landmark for ships.
The Tao people, the main population of Lanyu, migrated here 800 years ago from the Batan archipelago in northern Philippines. Flying fish are omnipresent in their culture and diet. Tao fish them using locally made canoes, called tataras. The circular patterns at both extremities of a tatara symbolize the boat’s eyes guiding the fishermen. The jagged patterns on the sides represent waves, and the intermediate patterns symbolize humans. The Tao people have many taboos regarding tataras and flying fish. In particular, outsiders should not touch tataras.
Opposite page: [2017] Another mural depicting a tatara and flying fish (see page 44), Lanyu island, Taiwan.

This page: [2017] Mural protesting against the 1982 construction of a nuclear waste storage facility, Lanyu island, Taiwan. The Tao people were deceived by being initially told that a fish cannery was going to be built! This issue is still not resolved.
Opposite page: [2016] Painted wall inside a restaurant at the entrance of the Taroko gorge, Taiwan. It depicts a Taiwanese indigenous hunter and his son in the nearby mountains.

This page: [2015] Bas-relief sculpture on a stone wall in Candi Mendut, a 9th-century Buddhist temple, Java, Indonesia. The wall depicts Kuwera sitting on a bench surrounded by children playing and helping each other climb fruit trees. Kuwera is a Buddhist/Hindu deity of wealth and well-being, and a protector of children.
This page and opposite page: [2015] Bas-relief sculptures on stone walls in Candi Borobudur, a 9th-century Buddhist temple, Java, Indonesia. They illustrate scenes from the life of Buddha.
Opposite page, this page, and next two pages: [2018] Stucco relief walls on the four sides of a square monument erected on the grounds of the former Portuguese fort of Benteng Kastela, island of Ternate, Indonesia.

They depict events of 1570 and 1575:
- Sultan Hairun of Ternate was murdered by the Portuguese on the 28th of February 1570 (opposite page).
- The immediate revolt of the people of Ternate (this page) led to the siege of Benteng Kastela.
- The Portuguese surrendered on the 28th of December 1575 (page 54) and left Ternate on the 31st (page 55).
This page and opposite page: [2006] Murals illustrating Buddhist hell, in a temple of Luang Prabang, Laos. They represent scenes of torture and suffering experienced by those who have harmed others during their lifetime.
[2006] Portion of an exterior wall of the Red Chapel, Wat Xieng Thong, Luang Prabang, Laos. The decoration on the pink wall consists of glass mosaics. Created in the late 1950s to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha’s death, this mural depicts scenes from the life in a local village.
[2004] Portion of a bas-relief wall that depicts the punishment of sinners in hell, Angkor Wat, Cambodia.
[2004] Portion of a bas-relief wall representing a war scene, Angkor Wat, Cambodia.
[2004] Bas-relief wall illustrating the defeat of the Chams by Khmer king Jayavarman VII in 1181, the Bayon, Angkor Thom, Cambodia. (The Bayon was the official state temple of Jayavarman VII.)
This page and opposite page: [2004] Bas-reliefs of Khmer military processions with elephants, the Bayon, Angkor Thom, Cambodia.
This page and opposite page: [2019] Painted walls representing scenes from Tibetan tales, gompa (Buddhist monastery) of old Dirang, Arunachal Pradesh, India.
Wall paintings at the entrance of the Gontse Garden Rabgye Ling gompa, Bomdila, Arunachal Pradesh, India.
Left: [2019] Wall painting in the Tawang gompa (founded in 1680), Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, India.
Right: [2019] Wall painting in the gompa of Lamayuru, one of the largest and oldest in Ladakh, India.
Left: [2018] Wall painting in the gompa of Sani (17th century), Zanskar region, Ladakh, India.
Right: [2016] Wall painting at the entrance of a cave that forms the old prayer room of the Takthok gompa (mid-16th century), Sakti village, Ladakh, India.
Opposite page, top: [2016] Wall painting in the Takthok gompa (see page 69), Sakti village, Ladakh, India.

Opposite page, bottom: [2016] Section of a long mural representing holy men, in the courtyard of the same Takthok gompa.

This page: [2018] Old mural painting in the Karsha gompa, Zanskar region, Ladakh, India. It is located in the gompa’s oldest section, which dates from the 11th century.
This page: [2022] Buddhist fresco from the 14th-15th centuries painted on the walls of one of the Saspol caves, located in a cliff above the Indus valley, northwest of Leh, the capital of Ladakh, India.

Opposite page: [2022] Detail of part of the fresco shown above. It represents Amitabha (the Buddha of Eternal Life) in Sukhavati. In Tibetan Buddhism, Sukhavati is a "pure land", a form of paradise. During funerals the name of Amitabha is invoked to facilitate the rebirth of the deceased in Sukhavati.
Opposite page: [2019] Nine-meter-high sculpture carved into a rock face, village of Mulbekh, Ladakh, India. It represents a standing Maitreya, a future Buddha. Some people believe that it was carved around the 1st century CE during the Kushan empire; others think it dates from the 8th century CE.

This page: [2011] Paintings of Buddhist deities (Green Tara on the left and Jetsun Padmasambhava on the right) on a rock face near the village of Thame, Khumbu region, Nepal.
This page and opposite page: [2014] Wall paintings at the entrance of the gompa of Yalbang, Humla region, Nepal.
This page and opposite page: [2014] Wall and ceiling paintings in a much decorated stupa near Simikot, Humla region, Nepal. The paintings on the walls represent Buddhist deities, including the popular Green Tara (left photo on this page).
This page: [2017] Wall painting in the Sri Lankan monastery of Lumbini, Nepal.

Opposite page: [2017] Part of a wall painting in the German monastery, also known as the Great Lotus Stupa, Lumbini, Nepal.
According to the Buddhist tradition, Lumbini is the place where, around 563 BCE, Queen Maya Devi gave birth to Siddhartha Gautama, who later became Buddha. Today, Lumbini hosts multiple monasteries funded by Buddhist organizations from various countries. The Sri Lankan and German monasteries are two of them.
This page and opposite page:  
[2018] Wall paintings by Uzbek artists, inside the former residence of the Imperial Russian Diplomat Alexander Poloutsev (late 19th century), Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
[2018] Wall paintings in the Alisher Navoi Opera and Ballet Theater, Tashkent, Uzbekistan. These paintings illustrate scenes from poems written by Alisher Navoi (1441-1501), considered the father of Uzbek literature.
[1968] Bas-relief sculpture on the wall of the staircase of the Apadana palace, Persepolis, Iran.

The palace was built under the Persian Kings of Kings Darius I and (his son) Xerxes I. Construction began in 518 BCE and lasted for 30 years.
This page: [2014] Portion of the painted ceiling in the Shahzadeh-ye Ibrahim shrine, Kashan, Iran. The shrine dates from the 19th century. The painting in the photo depicts Ali, the first Imam in Shia Islam.

Opposite page: [2014] Wall painting in the mausoleum of the Sufi leader Shah Ne'emat Ollah-e-Vali (1330-1431), Mahan (near Kerman), southeastern Iran.
This page and opposite page: [2014] Arrangement of paintings on an intricately shaped wall in the former house of a wealthy merchant, the Borujerdi house built in 1857, Kashan, Iran. Paintings depicting hunting scenes are better seen in the photo on the opposite page.
This page and opposite page: [2009] Bas-relief carvings on the walls of the Armenian church of the Holy Cross, Akdamar island, lake Van, eastern Turkey.

This church was built in 915-921. After 1914, it suffered from decades of vandalism, until it was restored in 2005-2006 and reopened as a museum in 2007.
The carvings on the exterior walls of the church illustrate biblical scenes, including the story of David and Goliath (this page).
Some of the extraordinary mosaics recovered from the Greco-Roman city of Zeugma (Commagene for the Romans), museum of Gaziantep, Turkey. Founded around 300 BCE on the banks of the Euphrates river by an Alexander’s general, Zeugma reached its peak during the Roman period between the 1st century BCE and the 3rd century CE.

Mosaic known as the “Gypsy Girl”. Some think it represents Alexander’s face, others that of Gaia, the earth goddess.
Mosaic representing Oceanos and Tethys.
This page and opposite page: [2009] Mosaics of Zeugma, museum of Gaziantep, Turkey. (See page 92.)
The mosaic on this page represents Zeus in the form of Satyros trying to seduce the Theban princess Antiope. The one on the opposite page depicts the river-god Euphrates.
This page and next three pages: [2013] Paintings in the rock-hewn church of Abuna Yemata Guh, Tigray, Ethiopia. This small church was carved into the upper part of a tall rock pillar. Thanks to dry air at this location, these paintings, believed to date from the 15th century, are extremely well preserved. Covering the walls, roofs, and columns of the monolithic surface of the church's interior, they depict figures from the Bible and of the Nine Saints, a group of Ethiopian missionaries who brought Christianity to this region of Africa at the end of the 5th century. The church is named after one of these saints, Abuna Yemata.

This page: Fresco on a wall representing Abuna Yemata on his horse.
Opposite page: Fresco on a roof dome depicting 9 Apostles. Their number may have been reduced from 12 to 9 for lack of space.
Paintings in the rock-hewn church of Abuna Gebre Mikael, Tigray, Ethiopia. The stunning blue and yellow colors of these paintings are unique among the rock-hewn churches of Tigray.
The painting of the dome ceiling in the photo on the right depicts 12 characters wearing golden crowns and holding crosses and censers. These characters are believed to be Elders of Revelation. The painter may have reduced their number from 24 to 12 for lack of space.
This page and opposite page: [2015] Paintings in the rock-hewn church of Abba Yohanni, Tigray, Ethiopia. The style of these paintings is unique among the rock-hewn churches of Tigray.

This page: The 12 Apostles, with a self-portrait of the painter, Giyorgis, in the lower right corner.

Opposite page: Abaydo, a disciple of Abba Yohanni, on the left, and Archangel Raphael, on the right.
This page and next four pages: [2015] Large wall frescoes in the church of Abreha we Atsbeha, Tigray, Ethiopia.
They date from the late 19th century, during the reign of Emperor Yoannes IV. They depict historical and religious scenes.
This page and opposite page: [2015] Frescoes in the church of Abreha we Atsbeha, Tigray, Ethiopia. (See page 104.)
2015] Frescoes in the church of Abreha we Atsbeha, Tigray, Ethiopia. (See page 104.)
Wall painting in the church of Debre Birhan Selassie, Gondar, Ethiopia. It depicts the crucifixion of Jesus with the Holy Trinity above.

The church of Debre Birhan Selassie was established in the late 17th century. But most of its wall paintings are likely to date from the early 19th century.
Opposite page: [2012] Rows of several dozen cherubic faces painted on the ceiling of the church of Debre Birhan Selassie, Gondar, Ethiopia. (See page 109.)

This page: [2012] Wall painting in the same church.
Erected in the 16th-17th centuries, this church has a circular shape, with a walled core surrounded by an ambulatory. Built with adobe walls, timber carpentry, and a thatched roof, it contains some of the most evocative church murals in the lake Tana area.
Wall paintings representing Täklä Haymanot (left) and Ewastatewos (right), two popular saints who lived in the 13th-14th centuries, church of Debre Sina Maryam, Gorgora, lake Tana, Ethiopia. (See page 112.)

Wall painting depicting Archangel Raphael, in the same church.
[2012] Mural in the church of Debre Sina Maryam, Gorgora, lake Tana, Ethiopia. (See page 112.)
This page and next three pages: [2012] Murals in the church of Ura Kidane Mihret (16th century), Zege peninsula, lake Tana.

Left: Murals on the circular wall of the church's core, seen from one of the entrances of the surrounding ambulatory.
Right: Another view of murals on the wall of the church's core, from the narrow interior of the ambulatory.
[2012] Mural in the church of Ura Kidane Mihret, Zege peninsula, lake Tana. The lower part of the painting depicts the martyrdom of Saint George.
This page and opposite page: [2012] Paintings in the church of Ura Kidane Mihret, Zege peninsula, lake Tana.
Opposite page: [2012] Educational mural in the school of the village of Chakra, Amhara region, Ethiopia.

This page: [2015] Educational mural on a wall of the school of the village of Gwala Goulo, Tigray, Ethiopia.

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This page and opposite page: [2015] Educational murals on walls of the school of the village of Gwala Goulo, Tigray, Ethiopia.
Petroglyphs on slabs of pink sandstone at Tizi-n-Tighist, Atlas mountains, Morocco. They are said to be several thousand years old. They depict battle scenes with horses, carriages, spears, and circular shields.
Street murals in Marrakesh, Morocco.
Such murals are rare in the streets of Muslim countries, where the representation of sentient beings is discouraged, and sometimes prohibited.
Huge mural on the back wall of a building, Porto, Portugal. The drawing, mostly done with simple black lines, combined with the man’s dark gaze and pink background, produces a remarkably expressive portrait. It was done by artist Frederico Draw.
This page and next three pages: [2018] Murals made of tin-glazed painted ceramic tiles, called azulejos, adorning walls of the vestibule of the São Bento railway station, Porto, Portugal. They were composed in the early 20th century by Jorge Calaço (1864-1942).

This page: Mural depicting the conquest of Ceuta (1415) by the Portuguese against the Moors, with Infante Dom Henrique standing at the center of the panel.

Opposite page: Mural showing the arrival of Portuguese King João I (John) and his spouse Philippa of Lancaster in Porto in 1387.
[2018] Wide mural of azulejos in the vestibule of the São Bento railway station, Porto, Portugal (see page 130). The portion of the mural made with blue azulejos depicts the battle of Valderez on the bank of the river Vez between Alfonso VII of León and Afonso I of Portugal in 1140. The battle ended with a Portuguese victory. The area of the battle, Arcos de Valderez, became known as the Viega da Matança (Field of Killing).
This page and next three pages: [2022] Striking Renaissance frescoes (16th century) in the castle of Rochechouart, Haute-Vienne department, France. They depict scenes of a day spent hunting deer in the castle grounds, including a banquet.
This page and opposite page: [2022] Renaissance frescoes (16th century) in the castle of Rochechouart, Haute-Vienne department, France. (See page 134.)
Opposite page and this page: [2018] Carved walls of Notre-Dame-de-Chartres cathedral, Chartres, France.

Opposite page, top: West portal (12th century).

Opposite page, bottom: Carved stone niches in the choir screen (16th-18th centuries). This screen, a wall that separates the choir from the nave, has a total of 40 niches illustrating scenes from the life of Jesus. The leftmost niche in this photo depicts the circumcision of Jesus.

This page: Two other niches in the choir screen.
This page: [2022] Carved tympanum on the west facade of the Saint-Etienne cathedral of Bourges, France. It depicts the last judgment by God. The lintel below Christ shows Archangel Saint Michael weighing the souls of the dead. Those on his left are damned and led to hell by devils. The tympanum was built around 1230.

Opposite page: [2022] One of the 15th-16th-century stained-glass windows in the Saint-Etienne cathedral of Bourges, France. It represents scenes of the life and death of Saint Denis, the first bishop of Paris. Saint Denis was martyred by decapitation in the mid-250s, most likely under Roman emperor Decius. According to the legend, he then picked up his head and preached a sermon (last scene at the bottom-right corner of the window).
This page: [2018] Carved tympanum over the entrance of the chapel Saint-Hubert, Amboise, France. It represents French King Charles VIII, who reigned in 1483-1498, and his spouse Anne of Britany kneeling before the Virgin. The chapel houses the tomb of Leonardo da Vinci, who died in Amboise in 1519.

Opposite page: [2018] Painted and gilded fresco on the wall of the chapel of the Blessed Virgin, inside the church of Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois, Paris, France. The fresco, which depicts the coronation of the Virgin, is the work of Amaury-Duval (1808-1885).
[2015] Painted wood ceiling of the chapel of the Black Penitents (17th-18th centuries), Villefranche-de-Rouergue, France.
[2015] Portion of the sculpted altarpiece (early 18th century) of the chapel of the Black Penitents, Villefranche-de-Rouergue, France. Entirely made of gilded and painted wood, it represents scenes of the Passion of Christ.
Fresque des Québécois. This large mural captures the story of Québec City by featuring its main historical figures and its leading writers and artists.
Left: Fresque du Petit-Champlain, another large mural that shows scenes from the history of a working-class waterfront neighborhood of Québec City.

Right: Mural on a highway pillar, a creative way to improve bland concrete structures.

Opposite page: [2019] Mural advertising a local newspaper, also in Keene.
Opposite page: [2019] Section of a circular bronze casting at the base of a column supporting a statue of Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858), in Newport, Rhode Island, United States. It is an American-sided rendering of Perry’s 1854 visit to Japan that led to the signing of the Convention of Kanagawa.

This page: [2022] Petroglyphs incised by Shoshone-Paiute Indians, in the Marble Canyon, Death Valley National Park, eastern California, United States. It is believed that they were created more than a thousand years ago.
This page and opposite page: [2022] Petroglyphs incised by Paiute Indians, in the Red Canyon, north of Bishop, central eastern California, United States. They represent hunters and animals, such as sheep, birds, snakes, and scorpions. Like those in the previous page, they are believed to be over a thousand years old.
Portion of the large mosaic on the facade of the Memorial Church, Stanford, California, United States, showing a group of men, women, and children around Christ. It is 26 meters wide and 9 meters high. It was rebuilt after the earthquake that hit the San Francisco area in 1906.

The Gates of Hell, a monumental sculptural work of Auguste Rodin (1849-1917), here at the Cantor Arts Center, Stanford, California, United States. Cast in bronze, it depicts a scene from Dante's Divine Comedy. It is 6 meters high and 4 meters wide.
Portion of a mural depicting terracotta statues of Chinese soldiers found at Xi’an, China. In this picture, two actual replica statues stand in front of the mural.
This page and opposite page: [2021] Murals in the streets of Chinatown, San Francisco, United States.

This page: Mural called “Notorious Pig” inspired by a Chinese tale, “Journey to the West”.

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This page and opposite page: [2021] Murals in Chinatown, San Francisco, United States.

This page and opposite page (bottom two photos): [2021] Murals depicting Bruce Lee (1940-1973), a famous martial artist and actor born in Chinatown, San Francisco.
Murals painted in the 1930s in the Coit Tower, San Francisco, California, United States. They depict scenes of the city life, with the mural in the opposite page showing a car accident and a robbery. Many of the artists who painted the murals in the Coit Tower were followers of famous Mexican artist Diego Rivera. They imitated his social realist style.
This page and opposite page: [2006] Parts of the mural called “Mural de la Revolución Universal”, Palacio Municipal of Zapopan, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. This mural was painted in 1970 by Guadalajara artist Guillermo Chávez Vega on adjacent walls of the Municipal Palace’s staircase.
Opposite page: The Socialist Revolution.
This page: The French Revolution.
[2008] Mural called “Morelos y la Justicia”, painted in 1976 by artist Agustín Cárdenas Castro in the former Palacio de Justicia, Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico. It represents José María Morelos (1765-1815), a former Roman Catholic priest who led the Mexican War of Independence movement from 1811 to 1815. He was executed by the colonial Spanish government in 1815.
The Otomi were among the first inhabitants of the altiplano north of present-day Mexico City. Today they still form the largest indigenous group in the semi-desert region of Tolimán. Here, mostly between the 17th and 19th centuries, Otomi families built small chapels ("capillas familiares") next to their houses to venerate their ancestors. Several of these chapels, which have been well-maintained or restored, are remarkable for their delicately painted walls and ceilings depicting religious and historical motifs. The paintings use a unique palette of locally made red, blue, and yellow colors.
Opposite page: Wall painting in La Capilla de San Diego, representing churches and Spanish conquistadors riding horses.

This page: Partial view of the decorated barrel vault of La Capilla de Los Luna. It represents angels playing various musical instruments among floral motifs, with the sun in the center. In addition, in the lower part, Saint Cecilia, the patroness of musicians, is shown playing the pipe organ. The fresco may be meant to symbolize life in paradise.
Opposite page: [2022] Carved facade of the Franciscan mission of San Francisco de Asis del Valle de Tilaco (17th century), state of Querétaro, Mexico. It combines Christian and indigenous symbols, including the Franciscan coat of arms (two arms, one of Christ, one of Saint Francis de Assisi, crossing each other over a cross), several saints, angels and mermaids with indigenous facial features, and ears of corn.

This page: [2019] “Mural de los Angeles” in the Asunción de María church, Pachuca, Hidalgo, Mexico. This mural is pleasantly atypical, as it breaks from the usual solemnity of church paintings. It was created in the early 1970s by Jesús Becerril Martínez (1926-2003), a muralist born in Pachuca. The original project was intended for the wall behind the main altar. But, following protests caused by the naked angels, the mural was finally completed in a less conspicuous place, next to the baptistery.
Part of a long mural celebrating the indigenous Nahuatl culture of the Huasteca region, in Pachuca, Hidalgo, Mexico. It is the work of Ildefonso Maya Hernández (1936-2011), a writer, plastic artist, and promoter of the Nahuatl culture.

Opposite page: Mural representing Frida Kahlo, a famous Mexican painter, leaning on a window sill, Mineral del Monte, Hidalgo, Mexico. Frida Kahlo was the wife of muralist Diego Rivera (see page 162).
Some of the stunning murals painted by Desiderio Hernández Xochitiotzin (1922-2007) in the Palacio de Goberno, city of Tlaxcala, state of Tlaxcala, Mexico. These murals illustrate the culture and history of the region before and after the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. Together, they cover over 500 square meters.
This page and opposite page: [2018] Murals painted by Desiderio Hernández Xochitiotzin, Palacio de Goberno, city of Tlaxcala, state of Tlaxcala, Mexico. (See page 174.)
This page and opposite page: [2018] Murals painted by Desiderio Hernández Xochitiotzin, Palacio de Gobierno, city of Tlaxcala, state of Tlaxcala, Mexico. (See page 174.)
Murals in the archaeological site of Cacaxtla, state of Tlaxcala, Mexico. The ancient city of Cacaxtla peaked between 650 CE and 950 CE. These paintings combine local symbolism with Maya stylistic influence.
Opposite page: The “Bird Man” (original painting in situ on the left, reconstruction in the site’s museum on the right).

This page: The “Feline Man” (original on the left, reconstruction on the right).
2017] Portion of the mural of the “Templo Rojo” (original on the left, reconstruction on the right), archaeological site of Cacaxtla, state of Tlaxcala, Mexico. (See page 180.)
Wall mosaic made of local seeds and grains, next to the gate of the former monastery of Tepoztlán, Morelos, Mexico.
This page: [2017] Portion of a larger mural called “El Mural de los Poblanos”, in the namesake restaurant, city of Puebla, state of Puebla, Mexico. The mural, which was painted by Antonio Alvarez Morán, depicts well-known residents of Puebla.

Opposite page: [2017] Murals promoting the defense of the environment and local culture against mega-projects, Cholula, state of Puebla, Mexico.
Festival: "En Cholula los muros hablan en defensa de la Madre Tierra."

Mostramos por medio del arte gráfico, en los muros de Cholula, la defensa del territorio frente a megaproyectos que atentan contra la vida, la naturaleza, el patrimonio arqueológico, los usos y costumbres y el bienestar de los pueblos.

"Cholula no se vende, se ama y se defiende"
This page and opposite page: [2017] Murals painted in 1974 by Yucatán artist Fernando Castro Pacheco (1918-2013), Palacio de Gobierno, Merida, Yucatán, Mexico.

This page: Mural called “Venta de Indios”. It illustrates the trade of Maya prisoners sent to Cuba as slaves to work in sugarcane fields, during the Caste war (1847-1901). This war was a major Maya revolt against the population of European descent. Although slavery had been officially abolished in Mexico in 1829, this traffic was especially active between 1855 and 1861.

Opposite page: Mural showing two Maya gods observing their creation, a Maya man emerging from an ear of maize.
This page and opposite page: [2017] Entrance wall of the tomb of Maya King Ukit Kan Lek Tok', Ek' Balam, Yucatán, Mexico.

This page: Stucco carvings framing the entrance of the tomb. They represent a jaguar mouth with teeth. Archaeologists found them almost intact.

Opposite page: Stucco carvings on the upper-right section of the entrance wall of the tomb. They depicts Maya warriors.
[2017] Wall painting in the church of San Bernardino de Siena (16th century), Valladolid, Yucatán, Mexico.

Opposite page: [2017] Portion of the carved retable behind the altar of the same church.
[2019] Mural warning people against chagas, Zipolite, state of Oaxaca, Mexico. Chagas is a difficult to diagnose, life-threatening disease caused by an insect-transmitted parasite.
Zipolite is a laidback village on the Pacific Costa Oaxaquena. It is said that its name means “beach of the death” in Zapotec language, due to local treacherous currents in the ocean. A growing group of muralists, some local, some coming from other parts of Mexico, regularly create new paintings on the walls of the village.

This page: [2019] Mural illustrating the destructive impact of plastic waste dumped into the oceans on seabirds. Today, it is estimated that 90 percent of seabirds worldwide eat plastic trash, many dying of it.
[2018-2019] Murals in Zipolite, state of Oaxaca, Mexico. Those shown above are inspired by the meaning of the name "Zipolite" (see previous page), others; as below and on the opposite page, by the local Zapotec culture.

[2021] Murals on both sides of the entrance gate of the cemetery, Zipolite, state of Oaxaca, Mexico.
María Sabina García was a curandera (native healer/shaman) famous for her healing mushroom ceremonies, called veladas. She was born in the mid-1890s near the town of Huautla de Jiménez in the Sierra Mazateca, state of Oaxaca, into a family of ancestral shamans. She died in 1985 at the approximate age of 91 in extreme poverty. After her death she became known as the “Priestess of the Magic Mushrooms”. The rumor has it that well-known singers of the 1960s attended her veladas.
Opposite page: [2021] Another depiction of María Sabina García (see previous page), Puerto Escondido, state of Oaxaca, Mexico.

This page: [2021] A remarkably expressive portrait of a man painted on a wall, Puerto Escondido, state of Oaxaca, Mexico.
This page and opposite page: [2021] Murals celebrating actor Fernando Luján (1938-2019), Puerto Escondido, state of Oaxaca, Mexico. The mural on this page illustrates two of his movies, “Mirada de Mujer” (“Woman’s Look”) and “¡Hombre al Agua!” (“Man Overboard!”). The mural on the opposite page refers to his role in the movie “El Coronel No Tiene Quien le Escriba” (“No One Writes to the Colonel”), based on a novel by Gabriel García Márquez.
EL CORONEL
NO TIENE QUIEN LE ESCRIBA

LA EDAD DE LA TENTACIÓN
Stucco relief wall, called the Frieze of the Bird Dancers, in the main pyramid of the Tonina archaeological site, Tonina, Chiapas, Mexico. Tonina was a major Maya ceremonial center in the 6th-9th centuries CE. This stucco dates from that period.
Opposite page: [2014] Painted wall in a covered market of Chichicastenango, Guatemala. It represents a Maya man performing traditional rituals.

This page: [2014] Nicely decorated facade of a dental clinic, Chichicastenango, Guatemala.
Murals in Casco Viejo, an old neighborhood of Panama City, Panama. They depict the struggle of indigenous people, mostly the Guna who live in eastern Panama and have an important community in Panama City.

Mural featuring Guna people and their red and yellow flag, which they adopted after the 1925 rebellion. The swastika in the flag is an ancestral Guna symbol called Naa Ukuryaa, which, depending on the interpretation, symbolizes the four sides of the world or the octopus that created the world.
[2018] Wall painting featuring a Guna woman, Casco Viejo, Panama City, Panama. The inscription in the upper-right reads “Escucha el sonido del corazón”, which means “Listen to the sound of the heart”.
[2018] Mural featuring three leaders of the Guna rebellion, Casco Viejo, Panama City, Panama. The Guna people call themselves “Dule”, hence the inscription in the mural. The man on the right, Nele Kantule (1868-1944), was a famous medicine man and an indigenous chief.
Victoriano Lorenzo was born around 1870 when Panama was still part of Colombia. He fought for indigenous land rights, which led him to take part in the Thousand Days War. He was lured into an ambush and killed in 1903, less than seven months before Panama separated from Colombia. He is regarded by many in Panama as a true Panamanian, a “Panameño de Verdad.”
Another mural celebrating indigenous culture in a busy street of Casco Viejo, Panama City, Panama.
[2018] Mural said to represent a homeless man protected by a cherub (barely visible in the upper-right corner of the photo), Barrio Getsemani, Cartagena, Colombia.
This page: [2018] Mural paying homage to the influences of the citizens of Cartagena of African descent, Barrio Getsemani, Cartagena, Colombia.

This page: [2018] Wall painting in Barrio Getsemani, Cartagena, Colombia.

Opposite page: [2018] Wall painting called “Destello Maria Mulata”, by artist Yurika mdc, Plaza de la Trinidad, Barrio Getsemani, Cartagena, Colombia. It depicts the official bird of Cartagena, the Maria Mulata. According to a legend, this bird rescued the locals from a devastating fire by flying them out in its beak. In the process its blue feathers were blackened by fire and smoke; it also lost its sweet song. The bronze statues in front of the mural represent Pedro Romero and the “Lanceros de Getsemani”, heroes of Cartagena’s independence.
Left: [2018] Portion of a mural named “The fox and the hair”, by Notable Salazar, Barrio Getsemani, Cartagena, Colombia. The mural depicts a fox mixed with the hair of a woman partially visible on the right of the picture. By playing on the homophony of the words “hare” and “hair”, the mural intends to evoke the English tale “The fox and the hare”.

Right: [2018] Painting on the facade of a café-restaurant, Barrio Getsemani, Cartagena, Colombia.
Left: [2018] Mural called “Smiling Afro-Colombian Woman”, by artist known as DEXS, Barrio Getsemani, Cartagena, Colombia.
Right: [2018] Painted wall depicting a native Colombian Indian, described as a shaman or a headhunter, Salento, Colombia.
This page and opposite page: [2015] Hillside geoglyphs in the Azapa valley, near the city of Arica, northern Chile. Built during the Chiribaya culture between 1000 and 1400 CE, they represent human and animal figures, including camelids, suggesting that the area was a market place for llamas and alpacas.
In many towns around the world, street murals are confined to some narrow alleys. In Valparaiso, they are ubiquitous throughout most of the city and largely contribute to its special atmosphere.
I was unable to get information on most murals, possibly because my photos are several years old and many murals have a shorter lifespan. So, I chose not to include captions and let the paintings be appreciated for their artistic quality. This first pair of pages and the next two pairs (222-223 and 224-225) show three murals, each spread over two opposite pages.
ROMPE EL YUGO DIARIO...
This page and opposite page: [2016] Murals painted on corrugated metal walls, Punta Arenas, southern Patagonia, Chile.
Two sections of a large mural painted on a corrugated metal wall. It depicts an old port scene, Punta Arenas, southern Patagonia, Chili.
The above picture indicates that the mural was painted in 2013 by artists Verónica Sepúlveda Pérez, Fernando Padilla Arrau, and Luis Pérez López.
[2016] Mural sending an environmental message, Punta Arenas, southern Patagonia, Chile.