

# ALL ABOUT TOWN

Art abounds in Chicago, including these many neighborhoods that have colorful murals, impressive sculptures and more. BY JAY GENTILE



While most visitors to Chicago are familiar with iconic local institutions like The Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art, to get a deeper sense of what's happening within the Chicago art world, it's best to get out into the streets. Chicago's public art and mural scene has exploded in the past few years, turning regular blocks into vibrant galleries of ever-evolving art.

**PILSEN** Dozens of brightly colored murals have transformed Pilsen into the city's preeminent outdoor art gallery. Here you can discover a large concentration of murals extending along the 16th Street rail embankment from approximately Halsted to Ashland, paired with another dense pocket of large-scale street art extending along 18th Street between roughly Blue Island and Ashland. With art covering the sides of restaurants, offices, galleries and even the steps of the 18th Street CTA Pink Line stop, Pilsen showcases pieces to suit any mood ranging from lighthearted works depicting Cheech & Chong and Bart Simpson to those exploring deeper themes such as a memorial to a recently murdered local teen and a "Declaration of Immigration." A bit further into the neighborhood, see the stunning mural-covered Hector Duarte Studio House at 1900 W. Cullerton.

**HUMBOLDT PARK** A large majority of Humboldt Park's 60-plus murals are concentrated along Division Street from Campbell to California, making for an easy street art stroll along the neighborhood's main drag. With many of the works steeped in political messaging, here you will encounter an array of pieces chronicling the neighborhood's rich history of Puerto Rican immigration. See a large-scale work centered around political prisoners depicting the words "Liberación" and several smaller doorway murals painted on the exterior of local Division Street shops. For something more playful, head to 1108 N. California to see a giant mural of a dog covering the entire front façade of a local residence.

**ROGERS PARK** It's hard to miss the bevy of outdoor art that paints the landscape of several areas throughout Rogers Park, from the sculptures and statues around Loyola University to the iconic Mile of Murals project. Beginning in 2009, the neighborhood had a goal of painting a full mile of murals along the path of the CTA Red Line. This Mile of Murals can be best viewed along Glenwood Avenue from approximately Farwell to Estes, with another more sporadic concentration of Rogers Park murals located along Ravenswood Avenue between Pratt and Touhy. Art even extends to the beach in Rogers Park, with the 600-foot seawall at Tobey Prinz Beach Park covered in vibrant color. Stop by



every Father's Day weekend for the annual Artists of the Wall Festival.

**WICKER PARK** This bustling neighborhood attracts art seekers (and Instagram influencers) far and wide. While the neighborhood's murals are more spread out than other more densely packed art districts in the city, most works can be viewed along Milwaukee Avenue from Division to North or along Division Street from Ashland to Hoyne. At the corner of Division and Hoyne, you will be greeted by one of the city's oldest murals (promoting racial harmony in Chicago since 1971 with the words "Together We Overcome" written in Spanish and English). There is also art by well-known contemporary painters like a mural of JC Rivera's famous bear near Division and Honore. Be sure to snap a photo of the ever-changing mural outside of "hidden" Chicago cocktail bar Violet Hour at 1520 N. Damen as well as the massive color-packed piece along Chicago's 606 urban hiking trail at 1813 N. Milwaukee.

**LOGAN SQUARE** As a younger crowd has moved into Logan Square in recent years, so too has the outdoor art. The neighborhood is now a moveable feast of eye-catching murals, most notably showcased along Milwaukee Avenue from approximately Fullerton to Armitage. With one of the most densely packed concentrations of murals located

Left to right: Community murals in Pilsen, one of Hebru Brantley's finest works in Wicker Park and a famous South Loop sculpture.

in the area behind hip cocktail bar East Room (which also has a "secret" entrance), keep an eye out for the famous "Greeting From Chicago" work at 2226 N. Milwaukee as well as large-scale portraits of Quincy Jones and Robin Williams. You'll spot murals on the sides of discount retail stores like Dollar Tree, trendy restaurants like Spilt Milk and music venues like Concord Music Hall.

**SOUTH LOOP** Known as the Wabash Arts Corridor, the affable outdoor art that can be found in Chicago's South Loop neighborhood is concentrated along Wabash from Van Buren to 13th Street. There's a giant moose blowing pink bubblegum. There's a large mural depicting the word "Harmony." There's art on the side of the buildings and student housing structures of Columbia College. With some murals simply fun to look at and others delving into more serious topics, the Wabash Arts Corridor offers a well-rounded introduction to Chicago's booming outdoor art scene. Be sure to check out the art at the Roosevelt CTA Red Line station and pay a visit to Columbia College's Manifest urban arts showcase in May taking over the Wabash Arts Corridor.