

How to Be an Art Connoisseur While Sitting in L.A. Gridlock

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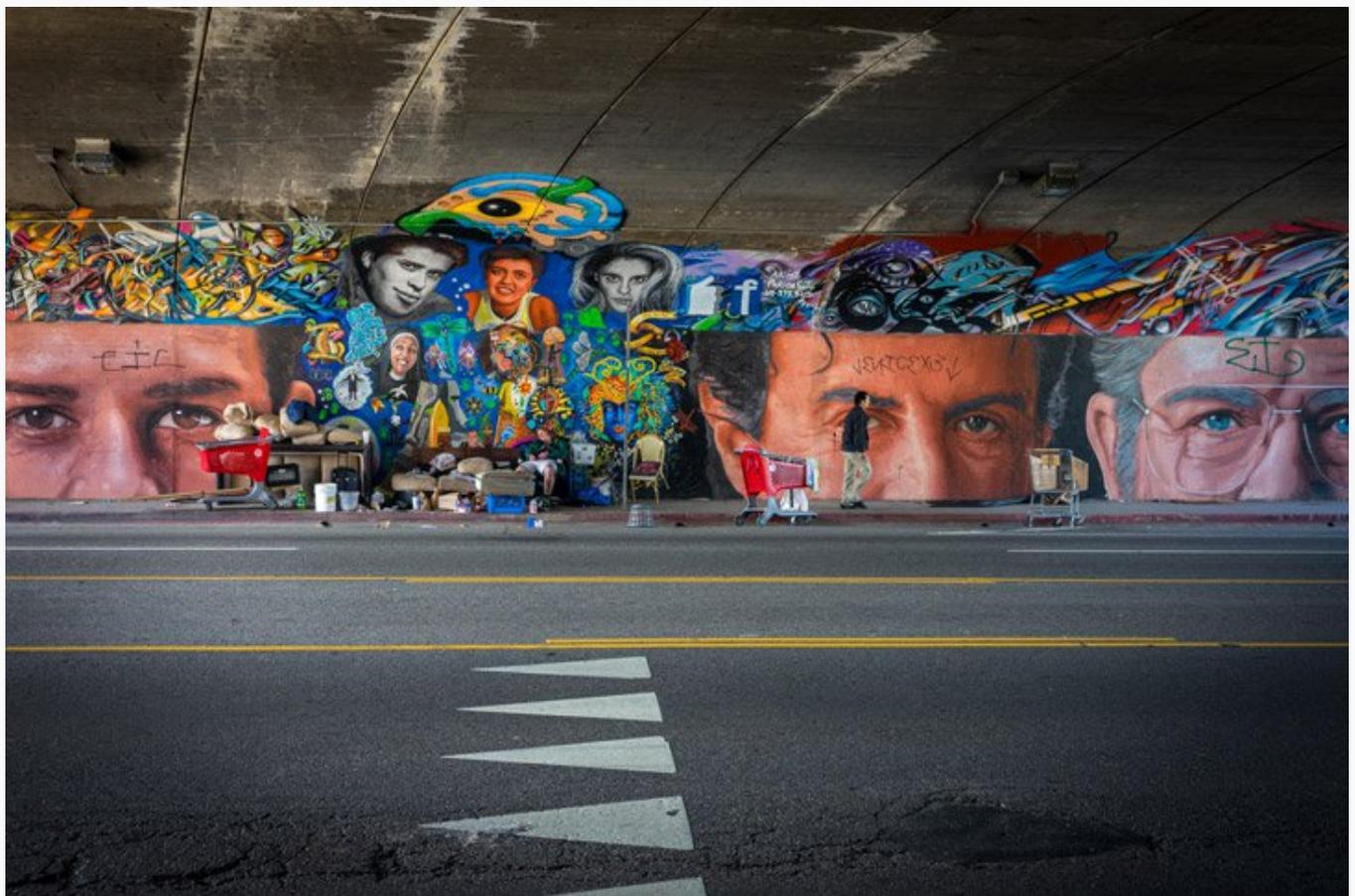
The city's vast collection of urban murals will keep you from losing your mind

October 4, 2016 Bekah Wright

Rush hour. Such an ironic term considering drivers often find themselves at a dead standstill at that time. Yes, L.A. traffic is maddening but why not use those captive moments to tune into your surroundings. What might a curious eye discover? One-of-kind art.

Ruben Soto's *Eyes* mural

On Glendale Blvd. underneath the Sunset Blvd. overpass



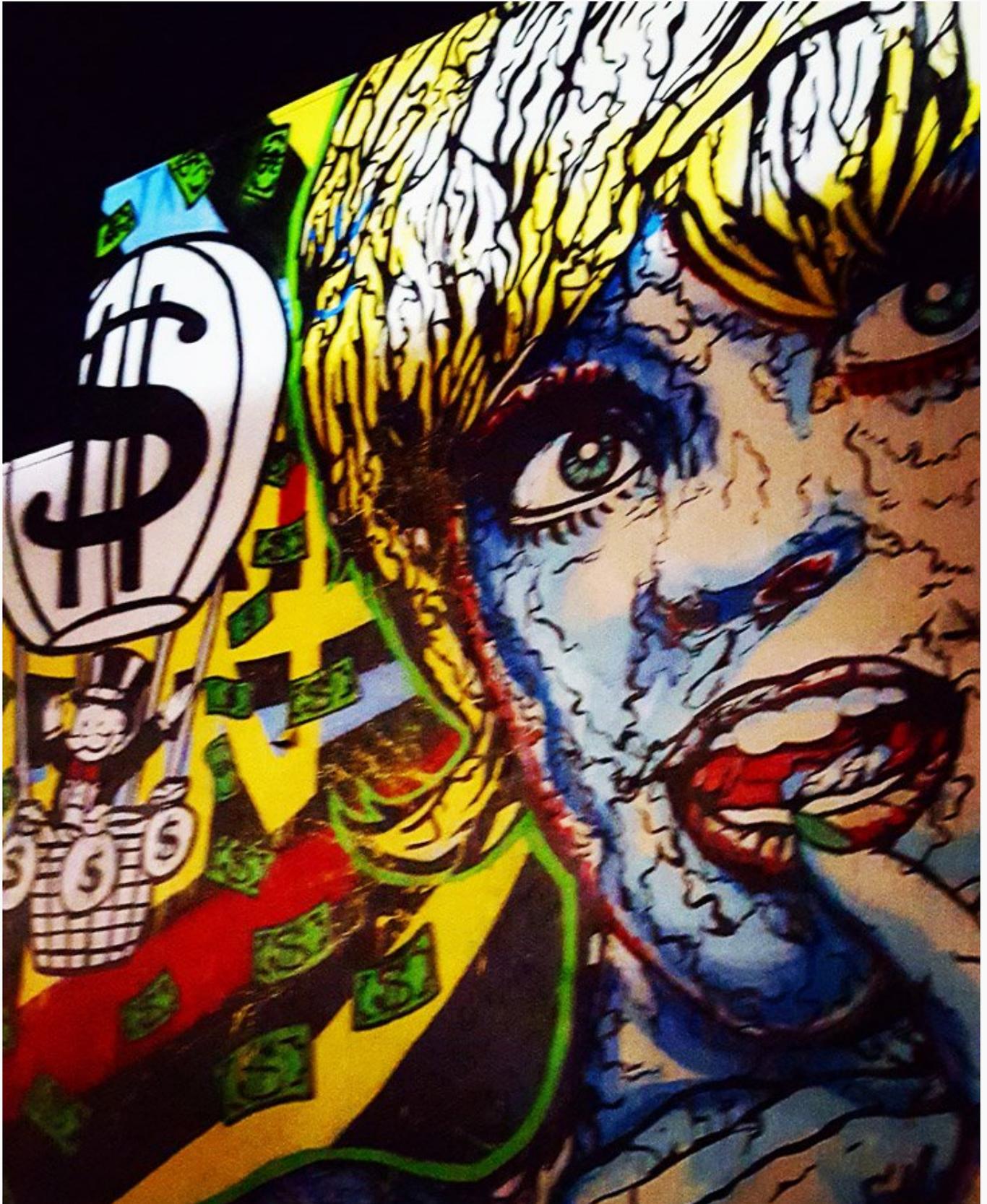
Ruben Soto's *Eyes* mural

Photograph by Andy House

It was during an Echo Park commute that photographer Andy House noticed Ruben Soto's *Eyes* mural. Intrigued, House delved online to gain insight into Soto's vision for the installation. Traffic, as it turns out, was taken into consideration when composing the project, which began in 1985 and was completed in 1991. Indeed the murals are painted to appear as if drivers (the portraits) are keeping an eye on backseat passengers (the audience) through a rear-view mirror.

Alec Monopoly's *Goldie Hawn* mural

Planet Salon Building (8126 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90046)



Alec Monopoly's *Goldie Hawn* mural

Photograph by Nicholas E. White

Lanes of chaos are de rigeur for Nicholas White. An entertainment journalist, he's often jockeying for position amongst photographers snapping shots on the red carpet. While driving one night along Downtown L.A.'s Bay Street, he caught sight of a mural inspiring him to start photographing the city's street art.

White now sees traffic snags as opportunities, which is how he first glimpsed Alec Monopoly's *Goldie Hawn* mural. "It's a subject matter and style that's great for that West Hollywood location," White says of Monopoly's portrayal of Hawn circa 1967, which is accompanied by the artist's trademark *Monopoly* game character Rich Uncle Pennybags. White loves the artist's use of "bold thick lines on the outside of his subjects to separate them from everything else. It's an elementary school-like trademark that adds to the mural's playfulness."

Under the Influence's *UTI 30th Anniversary* mural

Westbrass Building (2429 E. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90021)

As the founder of [LA Art Tours](#), Kevin Flint is always on the lookout for the city's emerging artworks. One that grabbed his heart was a graffiti/mural in the emerging Downtown Arts District at Westbrass, a plumbing manufacturer that had outside wall space in need of more than just a paint job. Enter Under the Influence (UTI), an art crew that began their L.A. installations in 1986 and has since expanded to Northern California, Nevada, and New York. What Flint finds appealing about the crew's 30th anniversary mural is its "stunning collaboration that shows what a variety of artists can accomplish on a single building."

Kami + Sasu's *Hitotzuki* mural

interTrend Communications Building (228 E. Broadway, Long Beach, CA 90802)



Kami + Sasu's Hitotzuki mural

Photograph by Brandon Shigeta

Long Beach encourages collaborations when it comes to street art. Over the past two years, the city has been running an urban art program known as [Pow!Wow! Long Beach](#). Once a year artists from around the globe descend to paint works of art in unexpected places. The result has made downtown gridlock a delight with 30 works of art such as *Hitotzuki*, a mural along the Broadway Corridor from Japanese artists Kami and Sasu. “Pow!Wow! is all about bringing people together,” says Steve Goodling, president and CEO of Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. “At the same time, it’s a chance to let individualism show.”

We still wouldn’t say “bring on the traffic jams!” but if you find yourself in unrelenting gridlock, remember: there is art to be seen.