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# Long Live Art

Viva LA celebrates the city's culture



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Apr, 2021, Pershing Square, Los Angeles

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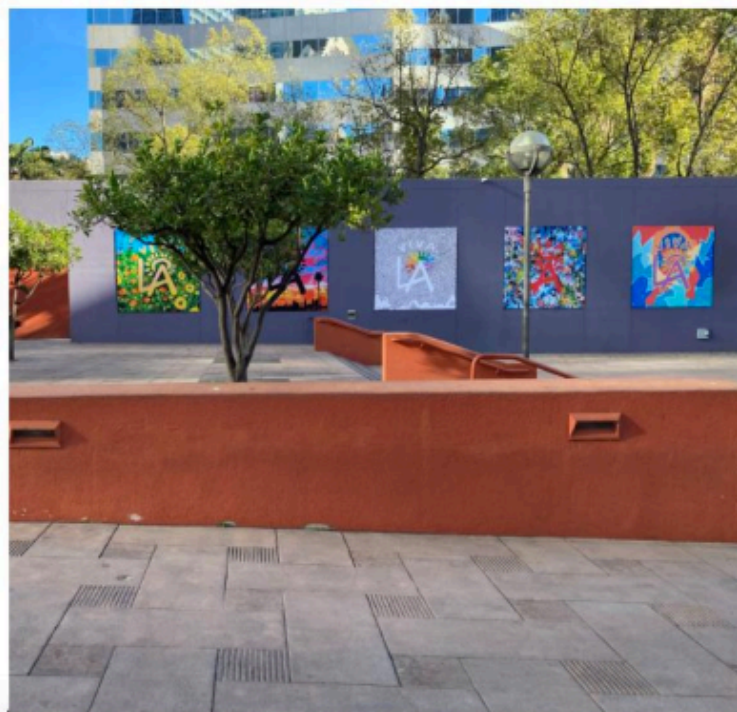
**THE VOICE OF DOWNTOWN LA SINCE 1972**





Viva LA created six blue flags with the different logos on them.

*Photo courtesy of Viva LA*



Viva LA had an art exhibit in Pershing Square throughout March.

*Photo courtesy of Viva LA*

## NEWS DT

# Viva LA celebrates the arts and culture of Los Angeles

By Bridgette M. Redman

LA Downtown News Contributing Writer

The Viva LA team is on a roll and spreading its passion and joy throughout the City of Angels.

After a soft launch last December, it's planting the art of Viva LA around the city through a multiartist exhibition in Pershing Square to blue flags it wants flying all around the city.

Led by Andre Miripolsky and Christian Mitman, the team wants to see the phrase "Viva LA" as ubiquitous as the Big Apple's "I heart New York." The two logos are based on Miripolsky's iconic artwork — one a heart sporting wings and the other featuring a halo ringing the A of LA.

### Explosion of art

The brand is designed to promote and celebrate LA's creative culture, which is why the team was excited to have an art exhibit in Pershing Square throughout March.

The center of the exhibit was a 15-by-30-foot mural by Miripolsky featuring stylized versions of the signature Viva LA and Heartwings logos. But the exhibit didn't stop there. Miripolsky was exhibiting artist and curator as he found six other diverse artists who each did a 9-by-9-foot interpretation of the logo that showcased their own art styles.

"We only had, like, a week for those people to do the work," Miripolsky said. "They did it on a 2-by-2 canvas, and it was blown up. The six different people's work really related to each other incredibly well."

The other six artists were Angelica Russell, Jill Sykes, Kent Yoshimura, M., Montana Mills and Sona Mirzaei. Each had distinct styles and diverse experiences. One was a multimedia specialist, another a skilled animator and yet another specialized in botanical art.

Miripolsky sought them out for their differences but also for their common love of LA and creativity.

Miripolsky said he hadn't curated in a long time.

"I look at the wall as one piece, so that the dynamic of having six 9-by-9s like that with the different styles is a fantastic situation, an emotional situation," Miripolsky said.

"All these artists and their work really complement each other, so it all worked together as a whole. I couldn't be happier."

The artists were told they had to have the logo in the center of their work, but otherwise they could do whatever they wanted. Still, they reflected their different experiences with LA.

"They all just exude the different backgrounds they have without saying a word," Mitman said. "That's the other thing I love. They tell little stories about the diversity of LA and working together as a group."

### Making a mark

Miripolsky spent most of his childhood abroad, often in underdeveloped countries, before settling in Los Angeles decades ago. When he arrived from Seoul, South Korea, he wanted his work to create a legacy for the city, a way of showing what the city meant to him.

"My absolute goal was to make a mark with art in the city," Miripolsky said. "Now, after 51 years, with the advent of Viva LA coming online, I am literally making a mark — as marky as you can get! For me, personally, it's a fantastic thing to have that opportunity to make a legacy forever."

He came up with the phrase in 2006 but only partnered with Mitman a few years ago, which is when the brand began to take off.

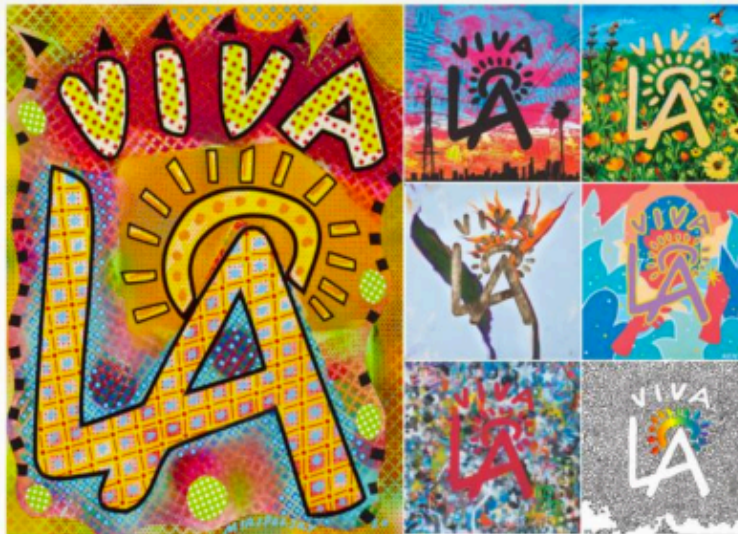
While it has been something he has been working toward for years, the pandemic gave him a break from his other work. He could then focus on Viva LA with Mitman.

"Now more than ever, the various communities of LA need to rally together to support and amplify diversity and the creative culture of our beloved city and the overall message of hope," Miripolsky said. "I have been an artist and lover of LA for over 50 years, and for this Viva LA exhibition to come to life in a location like Pershing Square is nothing short of a miracle. We hope that this fantastic Viva LA art is able to bring some joy to everyone during these challenging times."

### Spreading the joy

Mitman said the exhibition gave a way to launch a sponsorship concept that will allow money to be raised for other art exhibits throughout the city.





Diverse artists each did an interpretation of the Viva LA logo that showcased their own art styles.

Photo courtesy of Viva LA

"Viva LA is really for everyone, and the city doesn't have any money to invest in something new right now," Mitman said. "If everyone gives a little, every individual or business contributes a little, there is so much we're going to be able to do. This show was a chance to kick-start that."

Clune Construction was one of the first big sponsors to help finance the Pershing Square exhibit. Mitman said it has a long history of supporting the creative culture in LA. Bulletin Displays donated 11 billboards along major highways to promote the Viva LA launch, and Pershing Square Park Advisory Board/Art-Squared Gallery also contributed as a financial sponsor.

If all LA supports Viva LA, Mitman said, it will be able to sponsor a film or culinary festival, things that will boost everyone economically.

"It will be so exciting that other cities will have a hard time catching up with so much focus on the cultural events that attract people," Mitman said.

To spread the news, Viva LA created sky blue flags with the different logos on them. They're being offered to businesses, private residents and civic organizations for \$148 each.

"If everyone buys one, not only will the city look beautiful but the funds that are generated by everyone getting one \$148 flag would basically allow us to create culture-based events in all these neighborhoods and start getting people out again," Mitman said.

"We're moving in a slow, manageable way — not huge events but small, local ones."

Viva LA has reached out to groups such as the LA Restaurant Association and the Realtor Association, which can send notices to all their members about the flags. Flags are also being given to each City Hall.

"We're getting volunteers to walk the streets and drop off a worksheet to every business that is open and encourage them to go online and buy a flag," Mitman said. "We tried to price it at a level where almost everyone could participate."

#### Planning mural tours

Mitman said that when he was at Pershing Square doing 3D scans of the exhibition, people kept walking by and taking their picture in front of it. It's why Viva LA hopes to start funding murals citywide, letting the heart wings fly everywhere.

"I think it will really be an interactive experience that people can see and do," Mitman said.

"They can take a Harley tour and have an interactive map where you go around to all these areas and take photos of the wings. In time, it will help jump start the economy. People will stop and have lunch. They'll stop and buy a T-shirt. They'll start with little things."

Because the murals don't require crowds, they are pandemic friendly and can be managed on social media.

"It is just a really great opportunity to get people engaged with art and the city," Mitman said.

Both are eager to see Viva LA take off so that they can boost city pride and allow residents to come together with hope and joy.

"I think the pandemic is what's going to really allow the Viva LA to take off," Mitman said. "We started it two or three years ago, planning to launch it last year when everything shut down. The more we were home, and people were dying, it really started to get all this energy around it because before it was nice. Now we really need it."

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