

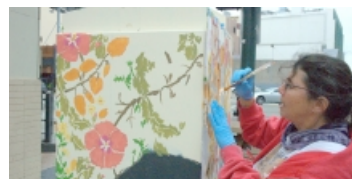
## Local artists help brighten two Oakland neighborhoods – Unveiling TONIGHT, May 4 (Community Voices)

Gene Anderson Fri, 4 May at 8:40am



Arts and Education  
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Oakland is full of art and some of the newest is helping brighten the Koreatown/Northgate neighborhoods and Pill Hill along Telegraph Avenue.

Sponsored by the Koreatown/Northgate Community Benefit District, or KoNo, it's part of a larger beautification project, which includes dozens of new street banners, newly-planted trees and 13 painted utility boxes. **This Friday, May 4, will be the official unveiling of KoNo's "birthday present for Oakland's 160th."** There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony, an unveiling of the new banners and an art "walk and talk" to view the murals and hear the artists' inspirations during the event, which runs from 4 to 6 p.m.

The art is as varied as the neighborhood, with 13 different artists using different styles and techniques to create their works. I talked with Lynn-Rachel Altman about her work, which covers a utility box at Telegraph and 20th. She called it a "conversation with Victorian artists" and said she was inspired in part by Victorian wallpaper with decorations reflecting the diversity of the KoNo neighborhood. The oak leaves and acorns in fall represent Oakland, of course, but also plenty. The pink flowers are *Hybiscus syriacus*, more commonly known as the Rose of Sharon, which is the national flower of South Korea. The small yellow flowers are the Ethiopian meskel flower (Yadey Abeba), which bloom after the life-giving monsoons and celebrate the New Year.

Further up Telegraph near West Grand, artist Eddie Colla was working on his assigned utility box. After scraping off old posters and priming and painting the box, he used a variety of techniques to create his work. To give the whole thing an aged, weathered look, he stained it with tea. Then he used a burnishing tool to transfer toner from an image to the box. The images include scenes of the devastation from the 1906 earthquake combined with more modern items and the transfer technique preserves some of the depth of the original photos. While all of the works will get a protective coating, he's designed his work to be able to "age gracefully."

I asked people at local businesses and passersby what they thought of the project. A few had seen several of the boxes and already had favorites; like the PopDot electric outlet by Lisa Hoffman at 30th and Telegraph. One passerby said of Altman's work, "It looks lovely ... I hope it can stay that way." That's a common problem with public art, whether officially-sponsored or not. In any event, the art is a big improvement over the old boxes. At best, they're plain metal boxes, but more often they're covered in layers of paint, old posters and graffiti tags. I'm looking forward to seeing the rest of them completed.



Whether you attend the unveiling or are in the area later for Art Murmur, be sure to keep your eyes open for these new murals. Each box will get a QR code, which links to the artist's statement about the work and their website. For more info about the unveiling, see the [Koreatown/Northgate Community Benefit District](#) website.

**KoNo project artists include:**

- Aisha Tymous – 20th Street
- Lynne-Rachel Altman – 20th Street
- Eddie Colla – West Grand
- Stevan Guterrez – 23rd Street
- Jack Eastgate – 24th Street
- Franz Fishcher – 24th Street
- Momoku Sudo – 26th Street
- Joanne Ludwig – 27th Street
- Desi WOME – 29th Street
- Lisa Hoffman – 3007 Telegraph (at 30th Street)
- David Kim – 33rd Street
- David Polka – Hawthorne Street
- Fulani Carter – 34th Street

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**About Gene Anderson**

@DIYGene blogs on [Our Oakland](#) and [DIY Insanity](#), and is a self-described "Oakland fan, blogger, artist, history buff and general ne'er-do-well". When not working to pay the bills, he can be found attending various Oakland events, supporting Oakland businesses (especially ones that involve beer), and volunteering to make Oakland better.

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