Greetings! Oxy Arts is collaborating with a community partner, Avenue 50 Studio, to develop a once in a lifetime research opportunity. If the below collaboration looks interesting to you, and you would like to propose a summer research project that relates to the project, we encourage you to apply for The Andrew W. Mellon Student Research Fellowship (the Arts & Urban Experience Initiative or the Community-Centered Research Initiative, depending on the direction of your proposed research). Visit www.oxy.edu/urc and click “Summer Opportunities” for Fellowship details. If interested, we highly recommend you meet with Kathy Gallegos, Director of Avenue 50 Studio, in person or by phone, to discuss the project and your proposed research well in advance of submitting your proposal. Oxy Arts can support you in the process of connecting with Avenue 50 Studio and additional community partners of interest.

Proposed goal: An analysis of the importance of tangible monuments in relationship to public space and the role women of color play in the preservation of cultural heritage in both Cairo, Egypt and Los Angeles, CA.

Project description:

Avenue 50 Studio in Los Angeles, CA is partnering with the Athar Lina Initiative based in Cairo, Egypt in the summer of 2018 to facilitate an international exchange experience. Three to five young women artists, ages 21-35 from each country will create murals that reflect cultural heritage and promote empowerment through the visual arts.

Cairo artists will be in LA June 17 through July 8, 2018 and during this time period Occidental students can interact directly with the artists in a way that supports their research proposal.

This may be an ideal fit for those who are interested in the following topics:

- Historical and cultural preservation as related to the arts
- Murals and public art
- International exchange programming
- Analyzing the role and impact of women of color in the arts
- Professional development of artists who are not traditionally represented in the field of muralism
- The role of the arts in addressing the complexity of the urban environment locally and internationally

Murals and culturally relevant monuments are often considered as an index of community health. Both Avenue 50 Studio and Athar Lina are active participants in the preservation of their respective cultures through tangible and intangible heritage. This is often done in response to the erasure of the respective cultures. Preserving these monuments means caring for a given community.

The project focuses on the public sphere because in high density areas such as Los Angeles and Cairo murals become tangible markers of cultural history and sources of community pride. This project grants participants the opportunity to be involved in the shaping of public space, collaborating on the portrayal of neighborhood values, developing community ownership of the public art pieces and gaining leadership skills in the areas of muralism and public art.
By participating in the Communities Connecting Heritage project, Avenue 50 and Athar Lina feel it is our duty to encourage a new, young generation of artists to excel in this field by creating a mural that promotes cultural heritage through public spaces. The organizations welcome Oxy student participation. This is an excellent opportunity for a student to pursue their own research through the Undergraduate Research Center through hands-on participation in this seminal collaboration between Avenue 50 Studio and Athar Lina.

About Avenue 50 Studio:

Avenue 50 Studio (www.avenue50studio.org) is an arts presentation organization grounded in Chicana/o and Latina/o culture, visual arts, and the Northeast Los Angeles area. We seek to build bridges of cultural understanding through artistic expressions. We develop programming to inform our community through innovative projects that connect artists, students, academics, and members of the community. Avenue 50 is committed to providing a place where the life and artistic interests of an under-served community can be made visible. Since its founding in 2000, Avenue 50 has grown from a small gallery to an active non-profit arts nexus, and is now an important arts destination venue in the Highland Park neighborhood of Northeast Los Angeles, a traditional arts enclave in the city. We provide a venue for exceptional, up-and-coming local artists and poets. Our monthly art openings and our varied literary events are a testament to the rich diversity that make up Los Angeles. Avenue 50 anchors a site that includes two galleries, a community art space, and three resident artist studios. Our programming includes art exhibitions, art workshops, lectures, poetry and readings, as well as hosting annual events such as Dia de los Muertos. Over the past fifteen years we have organized over 250 exhibits, celebrating a variety of artistic media and themes, and shown nearly 1,000 artists, poets and musicians. We are committed to bridging the diverse cultures of Los Angeles.

About Athar Lina Initiative:

Athar Lina (www.atharlina.com) is a participatory conservation initiative that aims to establish modalities of citizen participation in heritage conservation based on an understanding of the monument as a resource not a burden. Athar Lina (The monument is ours) believes that only when cultural heritage is beneficial to the community, will the community become an active partner in its conservation. It sees the conservation decision-making process as an inclusive participatory process between stakeholders and believes that conservation can be a vehicle for development. Athar Lina is run by the Built Environment Collective|Megawra, a twin organisation including an NGO and an architecture firm (www.megawra.com)

About Oxy Arts:

Oxy Arts is the hub for interdisciplinary arts at Occidental College. This dynamic programming initiative engages the Oxy community in a socially conscious dialogue around contemporary arts practices. Our core ambition is to foster meaningful collaborations between the College and surrounding LA arts communities. Oxy Arts is deeply committed to building a creative and innovative arts community and culture that celebrates diversity and individuality, and treats everyone with fairness and respect. www.oxy.edu/oxy-arts