



Dina Saadi, 332 W Broadway, Long Beach, CA 90805 (photo by Matt Valerio)

POW! WOW! Returns to Wow Us

By Meghan O'Dell

It's been two long years since the last batch of vibrant, eye-catching murals popped up around the city of Long Beach. With last year's festival postponed due to the pandemic, the 6th annual POW! WOW! Long Beach is making a triumphant return at the end of September – and, for the first time, will feature a sculpture festival on the beach.

Since starting in 2015, the week-long festival has resulted in 94 murals all over the city, creating a walkable and bikeable public art experience. Part of the worldwide series of street art events created by artist Jasper Wong, POW! WOW! brings beautiful and creative murals to public spaces in cities including Honolulu, Seoul, Washington, D.C., Taipei, Tokyo, and of course Long Beach. POW! WOW!'s mission is to “bring art and culture to public spaces while beautifying the city of Long Beach and cultivating community pride.”

According to their [website](#), the name was inspired by the pages of comic books: “POW!” is the impact that art has on a viewer (like a punch in a face that surprises you), and “WOW!” is the reaction that art has on a viewer. “Together they form POW! WOW! – a term which describes a gathering that celebrates culture, music, and art.”

In a short video made for LA Design Festival, Long Beach resident and art aficionado Matt Valerio took his then six-year-old daughter with him to visit five POW! WOW! murals in Long Beach. [Watch the video and learn about these five amazing pieces](#) (and some Long Beach history)!

This year's theme is Rise, Play, Repeat. From September 28 through October 5, artists will be creating large murals (and sculptures!) all over the city. They'll announce the artists on [Instagram](#) and provide a map in the weeks leading up to the festival so you can walk, bike, or drive to each spot and watch the artists at work. The sculptures will emphasize the “play” component of the theme, featuring large, interactive installations.

Over the last year, several of the murals were defaced; this year, those artists will be invited to paint new images over the defaced works. International artists who can't attend this year have the option of allowing a local artist to paint over their defaced murals. [\(Read more about this in the Hi Lo's article.\)](#)

The sculptures will likely be installed in the Alamitos Beach area, but this could change, so keep an eye on the [POW! WOW! website](#) and [Instagram](#) account for announcements and more information. Make a plan to walk, bike, or drive to each one so you can experience them in person.

Meghan O'Dell, a freelance writer and editor, has been a Long Beach resident for 16 years. She loves reading, seeing live music, and watching too many shows, and she lives with her husband and their Calico cat in the Bluff Heights neighborhood.



Fortoul Brothers, 332 W Broadway, Long Beach, CA 90805 (photo by Matt Valerio)



Allison Bamcat, 3444 E Anaheim St, Long Beach, CA 90805 (photo by Matt Valerio)



Bodeck Hernandez, 3rd and Redondo, Long Beach, CA 90802 (photo by Matt Valerio)