Murals serve as communication

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Photo by Jack McCoy

Charles Pooser, assistant professor of French, discusses a mural from Guadeloupe. Pooser hosted a presentation titled "Mural and Graffiti Art in Guadeloupe" as part of the International Speaker Series on Oct. 18.

New York is considered the Mecca of graffiti and mural art, but Charles Pooser, assistant professor of French, said this form of expression has become popular in Caribbean regions such as Guadeloupe.

As part of the International Speaker Series at IU Southeast, Pooser hosted a presentation titled "Mural and Graffiti Art in Guadeloupe" on Oct. 18. The presentation included a slide show with examples of this "street art."

Many of the images used in the slide show were taken by Pooser himself, on personal journeys to the French region.

"I began looking at the Creole language in Guadeloupe, but I started to become interested in these murals which were so prevalent," he said. "They were present everywhere."

Pooser said there is more to mural art than what is on the surface. He said he believes it serves more than one purpose.

"Mural art is more than just a beautiful thing," he said. "Mural art is a way to communicate."

In many Caribbean regions, mural art provides a visual form of communication. This is especially important in places such as Haiti, where a large portion of the community is illiterate.

"In Haiti, mural art has been a very significant mode of communication for political agendas and voices against the regime," he said.

Pooser said in Guadeloupe, there are pieces of art that are commissioned, meaning businesses pay artists to create the murals, and there are public pieces, which artists create just for the sake of art.

Pooser showed examples of many different types of businesses that used murals to draw customers in. The images included murals painted on food stands, restaurants, bakeries and other businesses.

He also said many companies use murals in interesting ways to draw attention .

"In order to attract customers, competing companies will paint their buses," he said.

The subjects of these murals vary greatly, and many cultural references are represented visually.

"The culture of Guadeloupe is not just African-European," Pooser said. "It is African-European, south Asian, French and Creole."

Pooser showed examples of another element of this type of artwork that is referred to as a "tag."

"A tag is like the signature of the graffiti artist," Pooser said. "Some of them can be very complex with shading and visual elements."

Pooser said these pieces of art are constantly being altered and sometimes removed completely.

"It's quite often that these pieces of art are replaced, but when they do remain in one place for a good while, the aging of the murals adds to the piece," he said.

What's My Professor Reading?

Eric Schansberg
professor
economics

"A Confession"
By Leo Tolstoy

'This isn't right, this isn't even wrong.'

– Wolfgang Pauli

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