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ART Around Us



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Written by Cheryl Ryan

ART

Around Us



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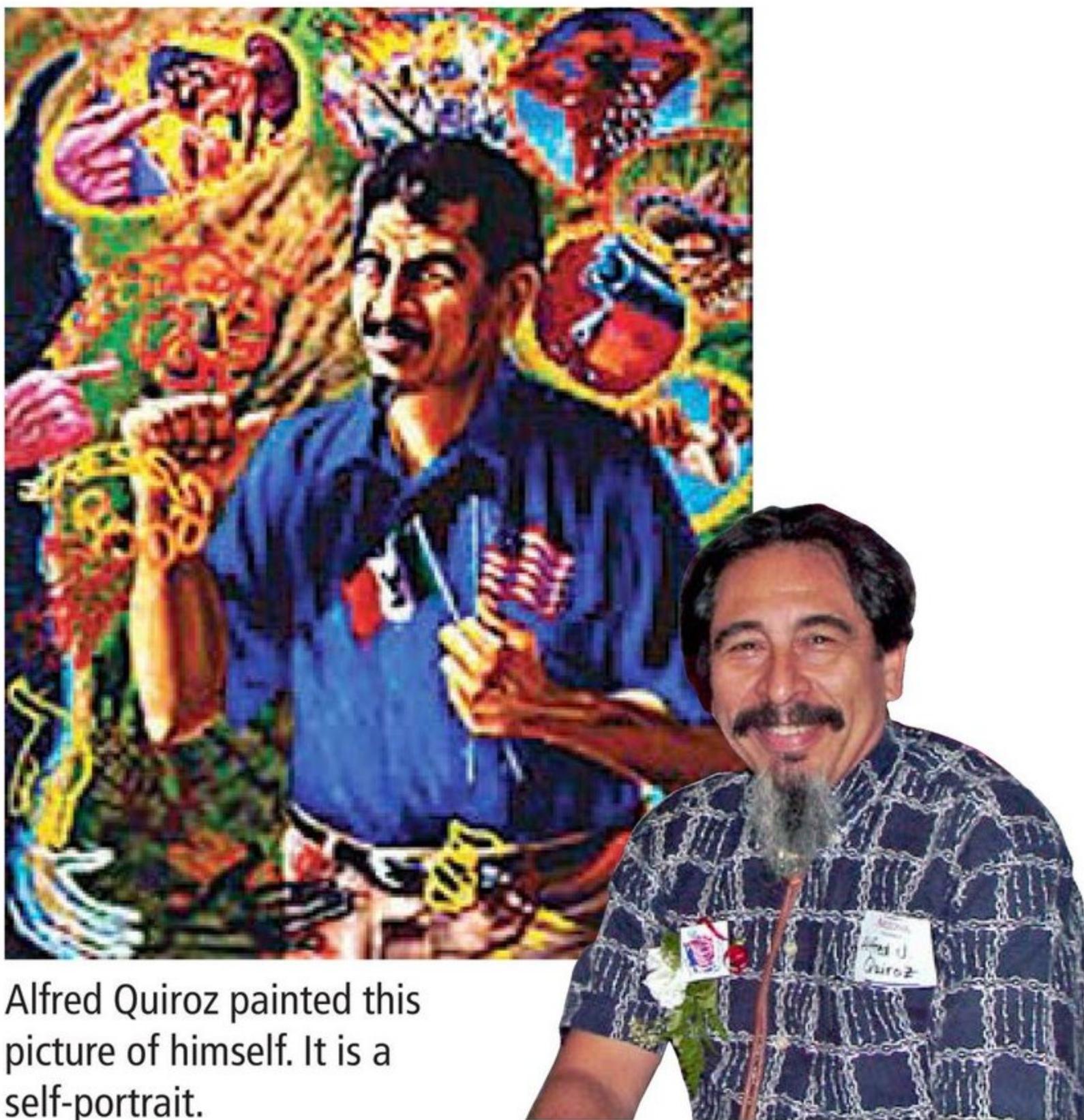




Introduction

Having art all around us, in so many varieties, makes our world brighter and more interesting. Art isn't mysterious. It can be anything that an artist creates: a curvy glass vase, a painting, or a custom-built motorcycle! First, an artist has an idea, then plans the size and shape, and then chooses the materials to use. A work of art can make us smile or think, or it can simply be beautiful to look at. Art can make us want to learn how to make something ourselves!





Alfred Quiroz painted this picture of himself. It is a self-portrait.

Painters

Do you know what an Impressionist is? Or a Cubist, or a Surrealist, or a Primitive? They are all painters, and painters are often labeled by their painting style. Painters may have their own particular brush technique or prefer to smear on colors with a thin, metal blade called a *palette knife*. Others splash, spray, or drip their paint, and some even use mud! They may use different materials or techniques—but they are all painters.



Mural on a wall

A painter may choose an unusual surface as a canvas for his or her work, perhaps because of its shape, texture, or size. A painter might paint on a sheet of glass, on dishes, or paint a design on a piece of furniture. Many painters think big, so they create wall-sized **murals** that are painted directly onto walls. Outside, they paint murals on the sides of buildings using waterproof colors so they will last.

Sculptors

Sculptors create art that has form and depth. It can be small, like a little carving that fits in your hand, or majestic, like the Statue of Liberty. Sculptors can use a **chisel** or a small axe to carve solid materials such as wood, stone, ice, or wax, or they might use a blowtorch to weld pieces of metal together. They might make **soft sculptures**—shapes created by piecing together strips of fabric, leather, or colorful yarns.



Wood sculptor



Metal casting in bronze

Whether it's an oversized statue or a tiny frog, **casting** a metal sculpture takes several steps. The sculptor needs soft clay, wet plaster, and a hot, melted metal, such as bronze.

First, the sculptor makes a clay model of the shape, and then covers the model with a paste of wet plaster. The thick plaster dries into a hard mold of the original shape.

When the mold is ready, the sculptor pours hot metal into it and waits until it cools. When the sculpture is cool enough to touch, the sculptor carefully checks it for cracks, and then polishes it for everyone to see!

Potters

Bowls, vases, and plates that we call *pottery* are made by artists known as potters. Potters make their art out of different types of soft, heavy, wet clay. They put a lump of clay on a **pottery wheel**, which looks like a small, round spinning table. While the wheel is spinning, the potter pushes, pinches, and pulls the lump of clay into a shape. The potter pushes it one way to make a bowl and another way to make a plate.



Forming clay pottery



Baking clay pottery

The potter bakes the clay object in a very hot oven called a **kiln**, which dries all of the water out of the clay. Once it's baked dry, the clay material is called **ceramic**. To make the ceramic colorful, and often waterproof as well, the potter uses a special paint called a **glaze**, which gives it a smooth, shiny surface.

Glassblowers

Glass art seems to glow. Light flows through it and makes the colors extra bright.

Glassblowers make their art out of a blob of soft, melted glass. They scoop up the hot, soft glass with the end of a long, hollow metal tube called a **blowpipe**, and then blow air through the pipe. The air creates a bubble in the glass blob, and the bubble can become almost any shape the artist wants. Glassblowers keep the glass soft and workable by frequently returning it to the fire. While it's hot, they can twist, pull, and stretch it into the shape they imagined.



A glassblower shapes a ball of glass.



Hot glass is soft
and can be shaped in
many ways.

Glassblowers work very quickly, but they must also be careful. Glass breaks easily. While the glass is soft, it's easy to work with and to shape. Swirling lines, brightly colored dots, or bits of metal can be added, or a handle can be put on the side. But once the piece cools, it is no longer workable and can shatter into pieces.



A glass sculpture

Fiber Artists

Thread, yarns, and pieces of fabric are used to make fiber art. A work of fiber art may be as tall as a room and hung from the ceiling, or may be the size of a delicate placemat on a table. Fiber artists love to create patterns of soft texture and color.

One fiber artist, called a **weaver**, loops yarns over and under each other on a weaving machine called a **loom**. The loom keeps the work threads even and the design organized. Weavers create colorful rugs, blankets, mats, clothing, and wall hangings.



Weaving loom



Patterned quilts and dolls are popular forms of fiber art.

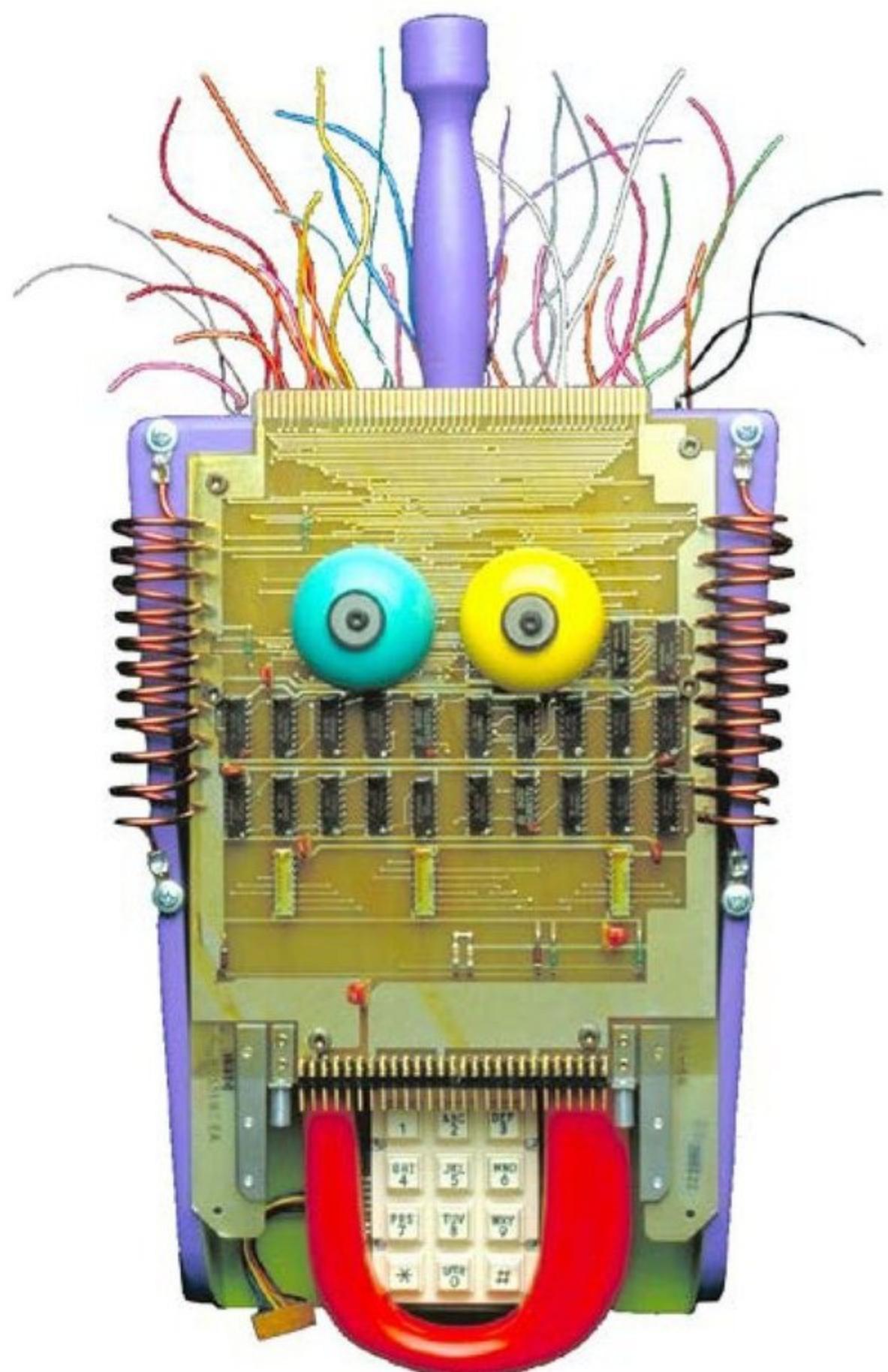
Quilters

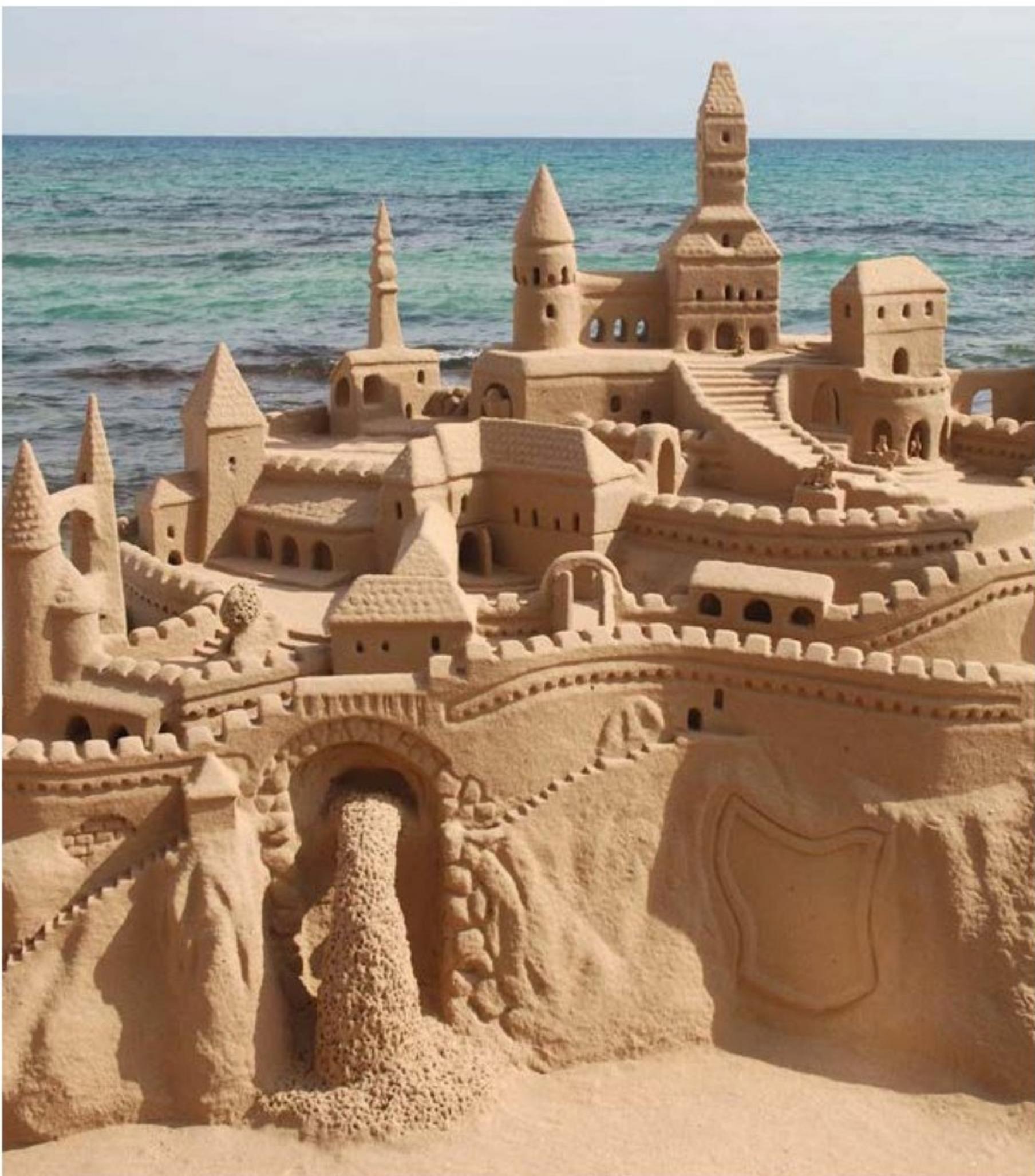
Quilters arrange small pieces of cut fabric into a design pattern, and then sew them together. Quilting began as a practical solution to a need many years ago, when buying new fabric was very expensive. People saved money by using fabric scraps from old clothes to make their bed covers. Those first quilts were simple patchwork designs. Over time, bed covers became beautiful works of art, created by talented quilters who combined colors and cut fabric pieces into rich designs.

Unusual Art

Some imaginative artists make **found object art**. They use rusty junk, old car parts, wheels from toys, discarded wire, and other everyday materials that they find. Other artists may place a familiar object, such as a water fountain, in a museum display, to prompt us to look at it differently. They want us to see it as a design—as art—instead of only seeing its function as a commonplace water fountain.

An artist made this funny face using a wooden cutting board, a circuit board, telephone bells, a telephone keypad, industrial springs, and wire.





Many sand castles are true works of art.

While their work may only last until the next tide takes it away, sand artists create elaborate sculptures on the beach using rocks and sand. Environmental artists often create artwork that becomes part of a park or garden. They may incorporate rocks, graceful tree branches, grasses, and other plants into their artwork.

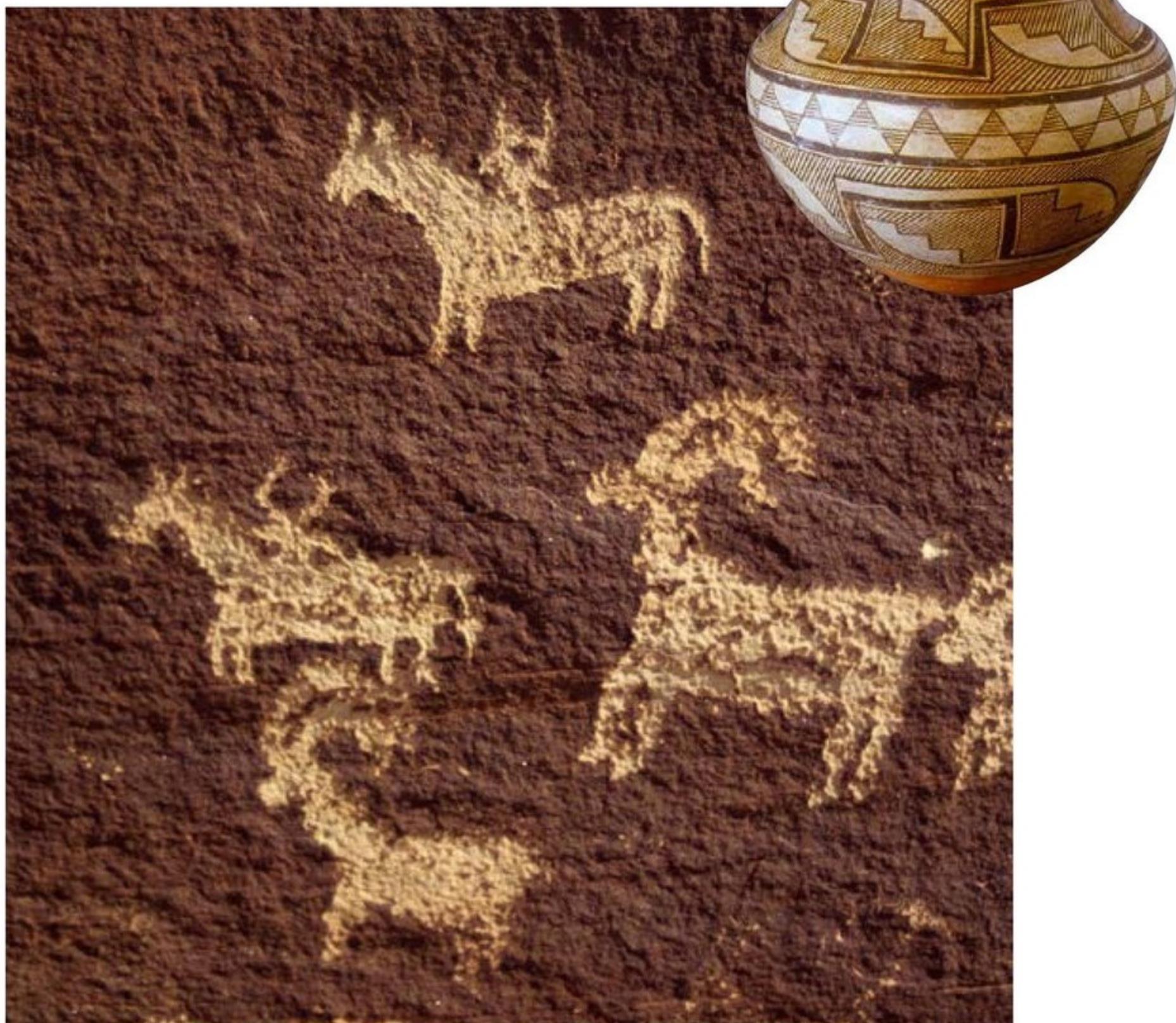
Take a walk inside a work of art! An art **installation** is very large. It is often an entire room or even a whole building that has been made into one big piece of artwork. Installation artists create environments that reflect the ideas they want you to experience. The spaces may be filled with objects, colors, shapes, sounds, and lights to create a special atmosphere. Walk on in!



An installation uses a whole room to make art.

Where Art Is Found

Long before we had written language, humans spoke through art. Simple drawings over 40,000 years old have been found scratched into rocks. Caves in France and Spain have primitive drawings of animals that were made over 13,000 years ago. In the ruins of ancient cities, scientists find pottery, wall murals, **mosaics**, and small carvings of animals and people.



An ancient cave drawing (left) Pueblo pot (right)

Artists want you to see what they have created. Explore and discover. Visit an art museum or an art gallery, or walk through an art fair.



Art museum



Public art comes in many shapes and sizes.



A mural of a lighthouse creates an interesting illusion.



Elephant sculptures add fun to a park.

Look around you. Somewhere in your own town, you'll find a tall outdoor sculpture, or a large mural on a wall. Many towns have set aside special areas for artists to display their work. Your town might even have a sculpture park where you can see several styles of art at one time.

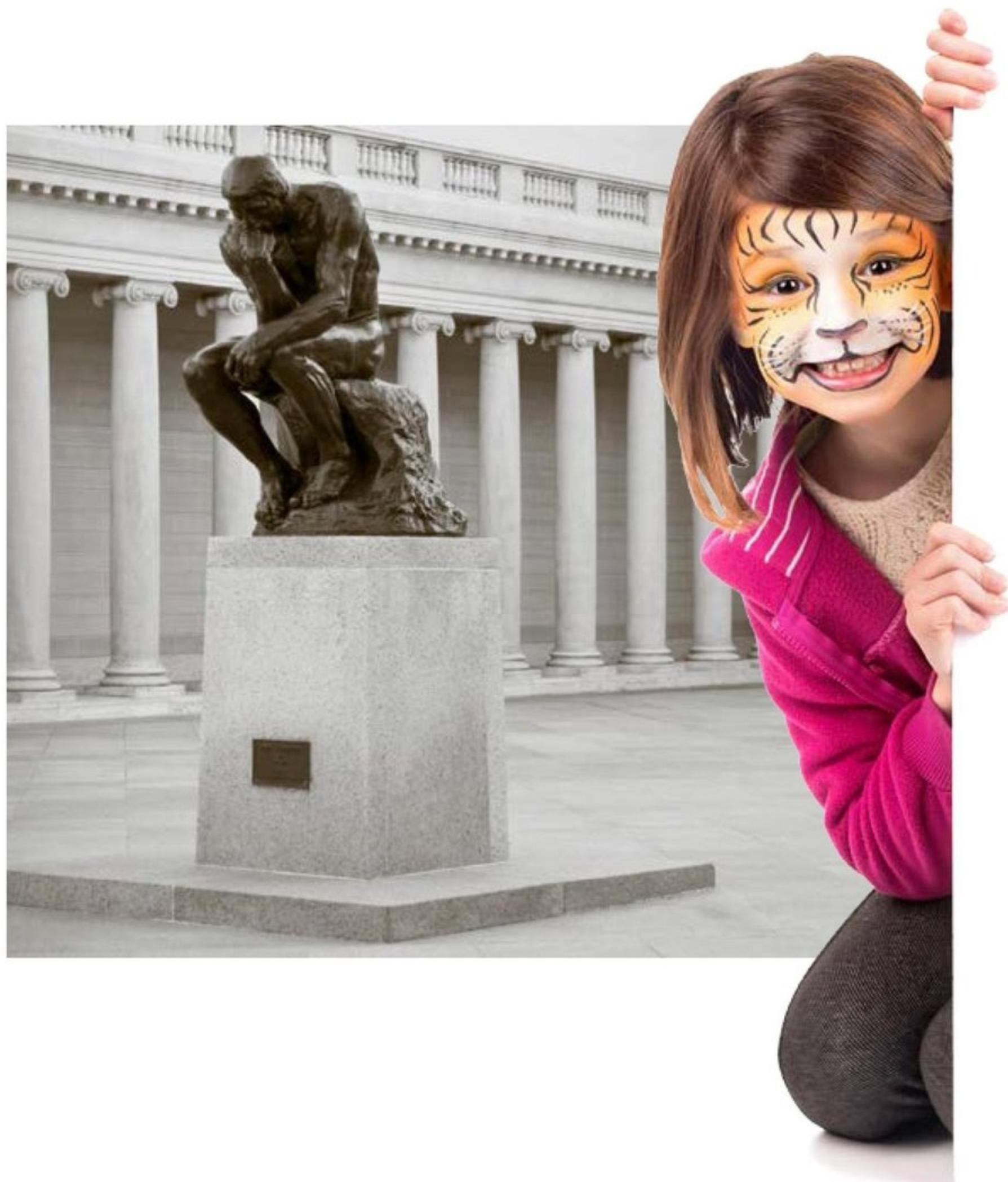
Why not make your own art? You can create any type of art that you like. Use soft, colored chalk to draw on a sidewalk. Paint a picture of your pet and make a frame for it. Use clay, snow, or sand to make a sculpture. Tie little bunches of sticks together to make an animal shape and spray it with color. Glue pieces of shells, stones, and wood onto a picture frame for a photo of your family. It's all art!



Artists use their artwork to tell a story or to express how they feel about something.

But art doesn't have to be serious or hard to do. Artwork can be interesting, or colorful, or funny, or simply beautiful to look at. The ability to see and enjoy art makes our lives more fun.

Look for art around you. It's everywhere!



Glossary

blowpipe (n.)	a long, hollow, metal tube used to blow air bubbles into melted glass (p. 12)
casting (n.)	the act of pouring hot metal into a mold and letting it harden (p. 9)
ceramic (n.)	baked, dried clay that keeps its shape (p. 11)
chisel (n.)	a sharp steel tool used for shaping stone, wood, or metal. (p. 8)
found object art (n.)	art made from everyday objects an artist has found (p. 16)
glaze (n.)	a special paint that seals or decorates ceramics (p. 11)
installation (n.)	a whole room or building made into a work of art (p. 18)
kiln (n.)	a very hot oven where clay bakes into ceramic (p. 11)
loom (n.)	a machine that loops yarn into strips of fabric (p. 14)
mosaics (n.)	designs made from tiny colored pieces such as paper, tile, or beads (p. 19)
murals (n.)	big paintings painted onto walls or buildings (p. 7)
pottery wheel (n.)	a spinning wheel that is used to form clay into round shapes (p. 10)
soft sculptures (n.)	sculptures made with fabric, yarn or other soft materials (p. 8)
weaver (n.)	an artist who makes fabric out of yarn or thread, often by using a loom (p. 14)

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