

By ebbie u o, e e ber ,20 5.

This mural by artist Zio Ziegler occupies the 55-by-340-foot wall of Tilly's offices alongside the 405 Freeway in Irvine. Don Leach Daily Pilot

In July, artist Zio Ziegler climbed aboard a hydraulic boom lift and was elevated to the “canvas” looming in front of him — the 55-by-340-foot wall of the building housing the offices of Tilly's clothing retailer in Irvine.

In only a couple of days, a mural took shape. In it, athletic-looking figures, each in a different pattern — some might say a zebra print, repeating circles, a sort of psychedelic paisley — appear to be running across a deep-blue background.

The sudden eye-catching splash in a city not known for color became a point of interest for commuters on the northbound 405 Freeway who might not have time in the notoriously unpredictable traffic flow in the area to study the intricacies of the work but could pause later and wonder: Where did that come from What is it What does it mean

It came from a collaboration among Ziegler, Laguna Beach art gallery Artists Republic for Tomorrow and Vans, the Cypress-based shoes and clothing company, with the approval of the Irvine Planning Commission.

But the planners' OK gave the mural only 90 days. Then it would have to be destroyed. Torrey Cook, founder of Artists Republic, also known as AR4T, went back to the commission and a couple months ago won more time for the artwork — until next June.

The Los Angeles Times
Tilly's mural prompts
discussion in Irvine about
public art

By Debbie Zucco,
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When asked if he will do the work of destroying his own art, Ziegler seemed to gasp as he said, "That would be heartbreaking for me."

Anthony Kuo, Planning Commission chairman, said he sees no more reprieves in the mural's future.

"I think it's the end of this particular mural, but there is an appetite to discuss what we will do in the future," said Kuo, who although he had concerns about the mural when it was proposed joined with the majority in approving it. All five members of the panel agreed to the later extension.

Not meant to last

Michelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel has lasted nearly 500 years. Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" is about as old.

Ephemeral art, on the other hand, is meant to have a short shelf life. It is meant to shine bright, make a powerful impression and then be gone, though ideally it will live on in the consciousness of its viewers, Ziegler would say.

"Ephemeral art [is] not a movement, per se, but has been an aspect of human creativity since we started making marks and objects, which would include ritual as well as 'art,'" Joanna Roche, an art history professor at Cal State Fullerton, wrote in an email. "But in terms of contemporary art — post WWII — it is a not-uncommon practice of many artists to make work that is short-lived and meant to be experienced by its viewers over specific durations of time.

"This would include performance art, earth art — works that use nature/ earth — and a broad category of artistic practice referred to as street art. This includes graffiti, stencil art and other mark-making in the urban environment."

Last month, for example, artist Laddie John Dill presented his "Electric Light Blanket," a show of light and laser effects shining from the cliffs in Laguna Beach to the city's Main Beach and beyond. He collaborated with Laserium, a manufacturer of laser projection systems, followed the necessary process with the Federal Aviation Administration so that pilots could be alerted, and proceeded to plan the show. The performance piece delivered four hours of choreographed laser light sequences and then was dismantled.

Ziegler, 27, knew going in that his work in Irvine would be short-lived.

"As a conceptual artist, I am fine with its decay and destruction, but from a humanistic perspective, as someone who loves Southern California, I don't understand why it has to go," said the artist, who lives in the Bay Area.

He appreciates the evolution of art and the power of the ephemeral.

"I read once that good art fades, all things, beautiful faces, even in Flemish art when one apple has a blemish," he said. "If you think of painting, during the Renaissance, it was to heighten, to elevate for time immemorial. So I see the very value.