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MARCH EVENT CELEBRATES ARTS IN LOS ANGELES

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It could be the waiter or waitress aspiring to be a Hollywood star. The annoying teens down the street with their garage band. Or even the hipsters in the gritty downtown Arts District who sell their wares at weekend shows throughout the city.

It could be the neighborhood theater troupe and barbershop quartet. In fact, just about everything but the neighborhood karaoke bar is being saluted as part of a monthlong ``Creative LA'' celebration of the arts in Los Angeles.

``This past week we celebrated the glitz and glamour of the red carpet with the Academy Awards,'' Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said at a news conference kicking off the event at the Getty Center.

``L.A.'s identity is one where the economy is linked to the entertainment, arts, design and fashion worlds. Every week, people come from all over the country and arrive in L.A. with dreams of fame and fortune on the silver screen. But it is more than that.''

The city is home to more than 2,500 arts organizations -- from museums and theaters to musical groups -- that create more than 450,000 jobs accounting for \$4 billion a year for the economy.

And, culture and arts appreciation is not just for the highbrow.

The Getty Center alone last year drew more than 1.3million visitors, including 90,000 students who got free admission. An additional 300,000 visited the newly opened Getty Villa in Malibu this past year.

The monthlong drive to recognize events -- schedules are available at www.culturela.org/events -- is designed to highlight some of the venues in the city where more than 375 parades, festivals and other events are held each year.

``We are taking this one month to showcase what is going on all year long,'' said Karen Constine, general manager of the city Cultural Affairs Department.

Architect Frank Gehry, whom Villaraigosa praised for taking a ``pathway to creativity,'' said he has never wanted to work in any other city -- even though his designs include some of the most famous modern buildings in the world.

``I became an architect in Los Angeles because here you can fly under the radar,'' said Gehry, who designed the Disney Concert Hall and is developing the Grand Avenue project.

`` I like the feeling and character of Los Angeles. It's the character of the people who live here ... and are interested in the connectivity between art and architecture."

Also involved in the campaign are **Town Hall Los Angeles**, USC, UCLA, Sony Pictures, Art Center College of Design, CalArts and several private organizations.

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