

# New ASU mural traces meaning across the Valley

By Julia Taylor, ASU News  
August 24, 2026

This fall, the [School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies](#) unveiled a new mural, “You Are Here,” created by [Jason Bruner](#), professor of religious studies.

The mural, which resides in [Lattie F. Coor Hall](#), room 4403, uses six panels, each based on a different type of publicly available map — from heat maps to population maps to street maps — to create one continuous depiction of the Valley of the Sun.

The project is the most recent of the school’s collaborations between the humanities and public art on campus, under the leadership of Director [Richard Amesbury](#).

“Professor Bruner’s cartographic panels remind us of the various ways we represent the world,” Amesbury said. “Maps tell stories, reflect interests, organize data and shape our encounters with the environment and with each other. These different ways of seeing are illustrative of the texture and complexity of the Valley.

“We’re excited that the mural will have a permanent home in SHPRS.”

The panels are modeled after:

- A mid-1920s hand-drawn archeological map of the original canal system

- A 1957 population density map

- A contemporary street map

- A contemporary heat map

- A 1940s–50s topographical map

The inspiration for the mural came in part from Bruner’s appreciation of the archeological canal map, and how it depicts the Valley without today’s cities. The piece invites viewers to see how

points of continuity, such as the Salt River flowing through each panel, are present across history in different ways.

“I think about how any of the maps could tell multiple stories, even though they’re primarily intended to show one or two things,” Bruner said.

According to him, this is most apparent when viewing the heat map, which reflects wealth and shows how choices that were made when the area was in development still affect the space to this day. Along this panel, a stark line cuts across the map, separating areas with cooler colors — like green, blue, and even yellow and orange — from an expanse of red space, denoting the hottest locations. This red area begins at Van Buren Street and extends south, reflecting Phoenix’s redline<sup>1</sup>. Redlined areas often received less resources and shade infrastructure, resulting in higher overall temperatures throughout south Phoenix, even to this day.

“None of (the panels) are entirely cultural; none of them are entirely natural,” Bruner said. “It’s sort of this accrual of what people have done with this place, and how, now in 2026, we have quite literally inherited all of this.”

The School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies has hosted a distinguished artist-in-residence program featuring artists like San Carlos Apache-Akimel O’odham artist Douglas Miles (2021–22) and Guggenheim Fellow Sama Alshaibi (2024). During Miles’ residence, he [painted a mural live](#) in the school’s lobby, while Alshaibi’s residence featured a [two-part celebration](#) of her artwork in partnership with the [ASU Art Museum](#).

The school also hosted a student photography competition in 2022, and collaborated with the [School of Art](#) in 2024 to [create works of art](#) that celebrate the Boyce Thompson Arboretum’s historical significance and sense of place.

---

*This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).*

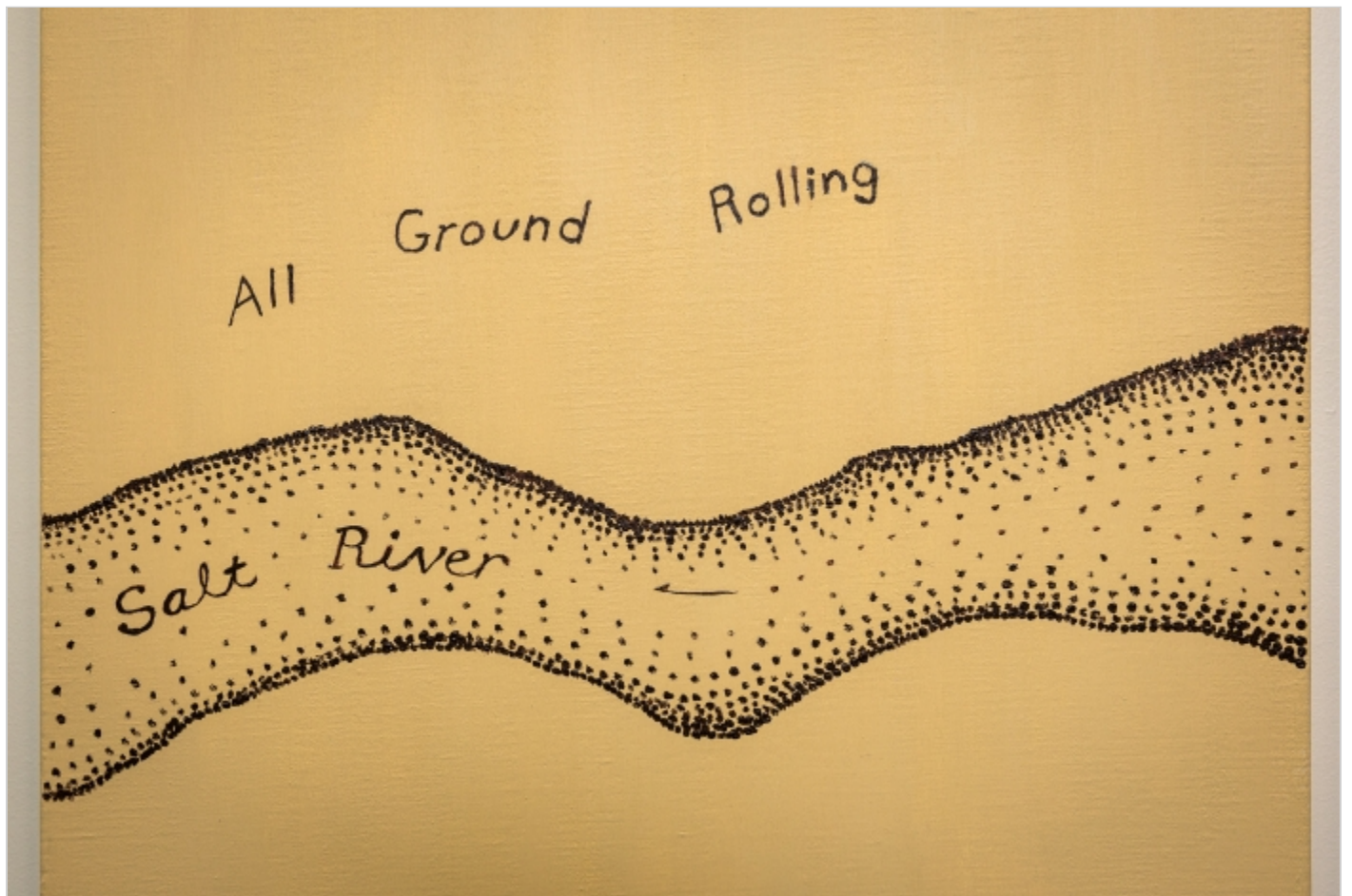
<sup>1</sup> Redlining is a discriminatory practice in which financial services are withheld from neighborhoods that have significant numbers of racial and ethnic minorities. Source: Wikipedia

## Main image

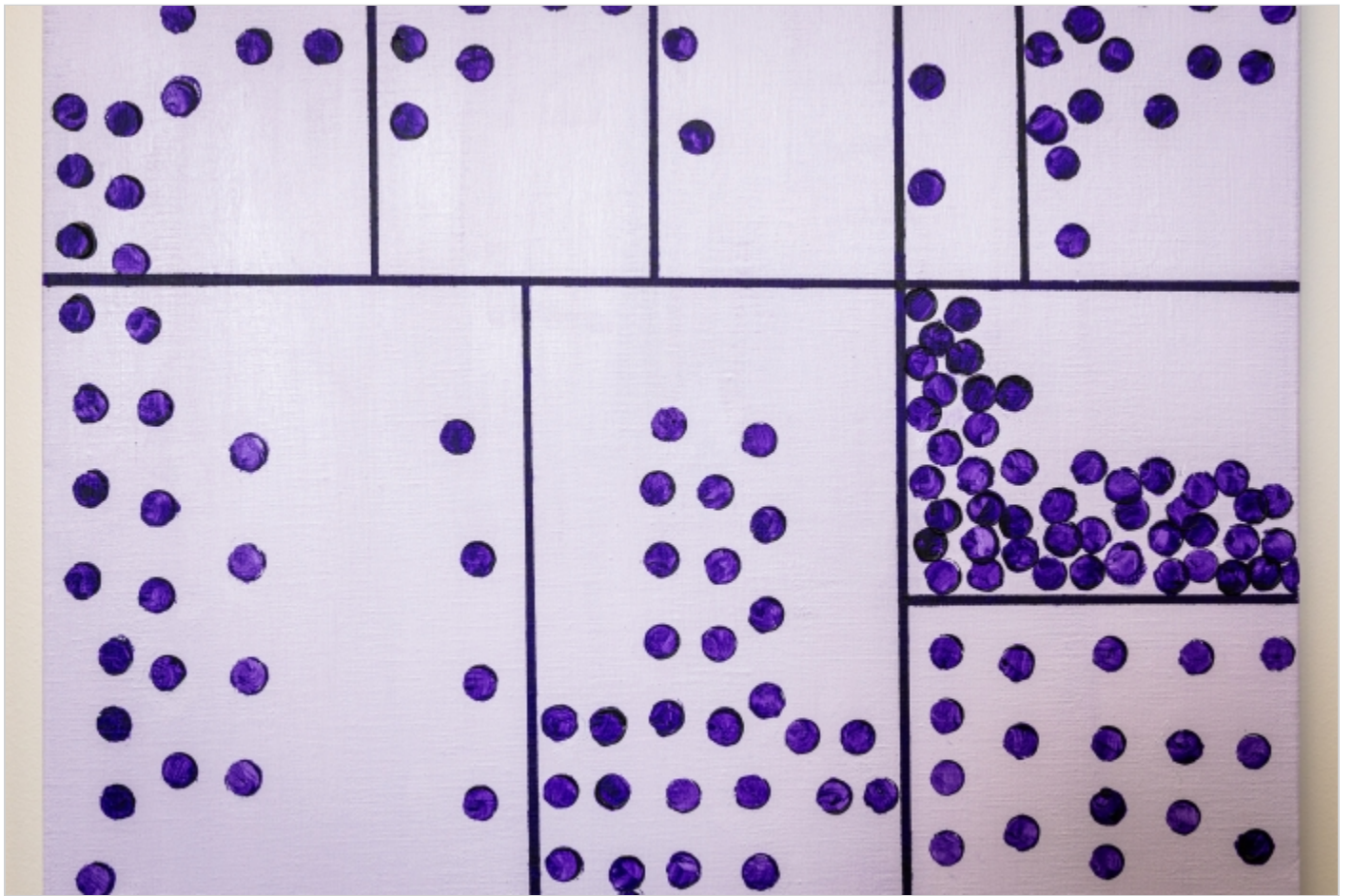


Professor Jason Bruner and his mural, "You Are Here," which depicts the Valley using maps that reflect different visual priorities. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News

## Gallery



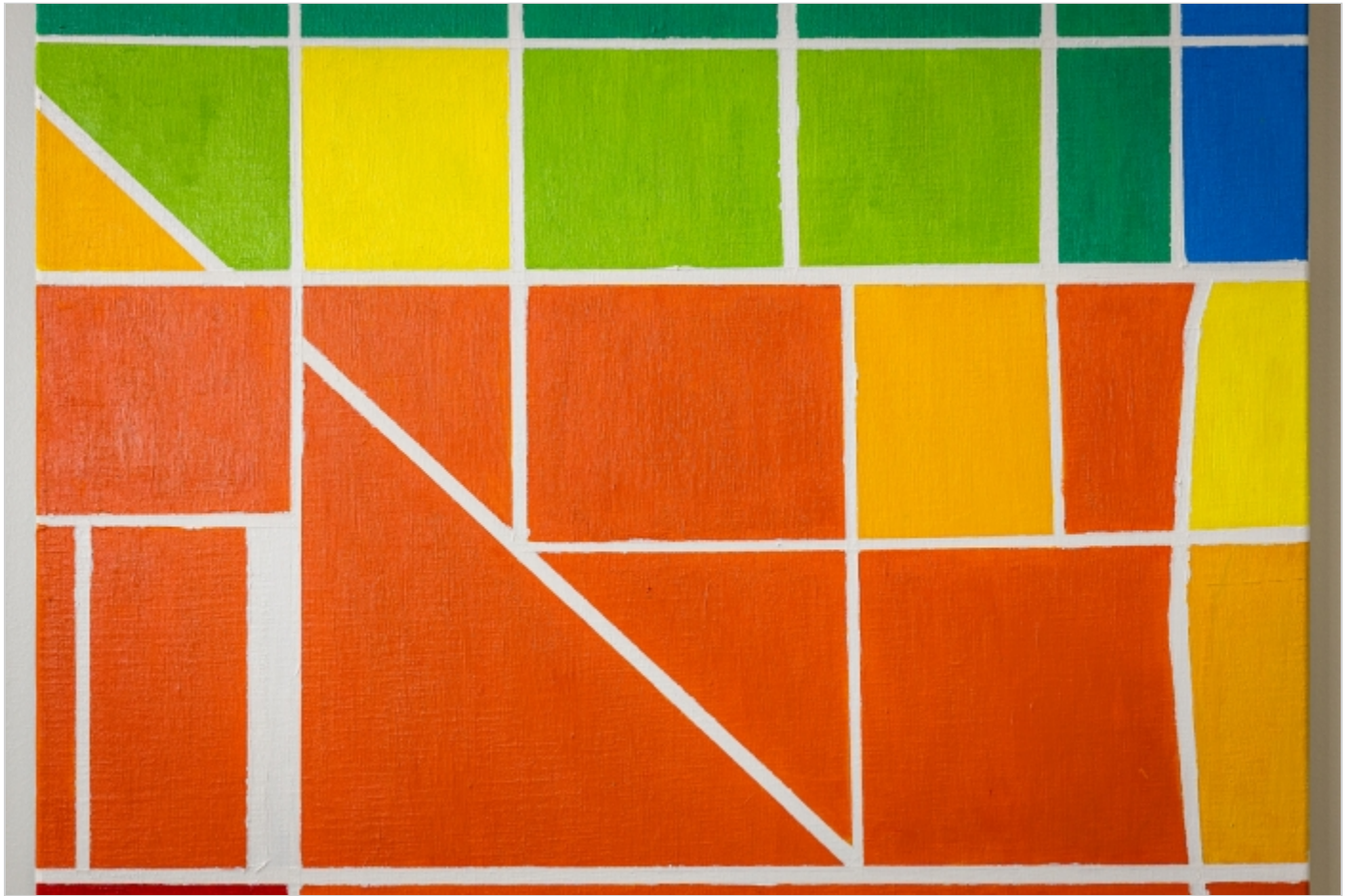
The mural begins with a painting of a mid-1920s hand-drawn archeological map of the Valley's original canal system. The map depicts prehistoric irrigation canals throughout the area.



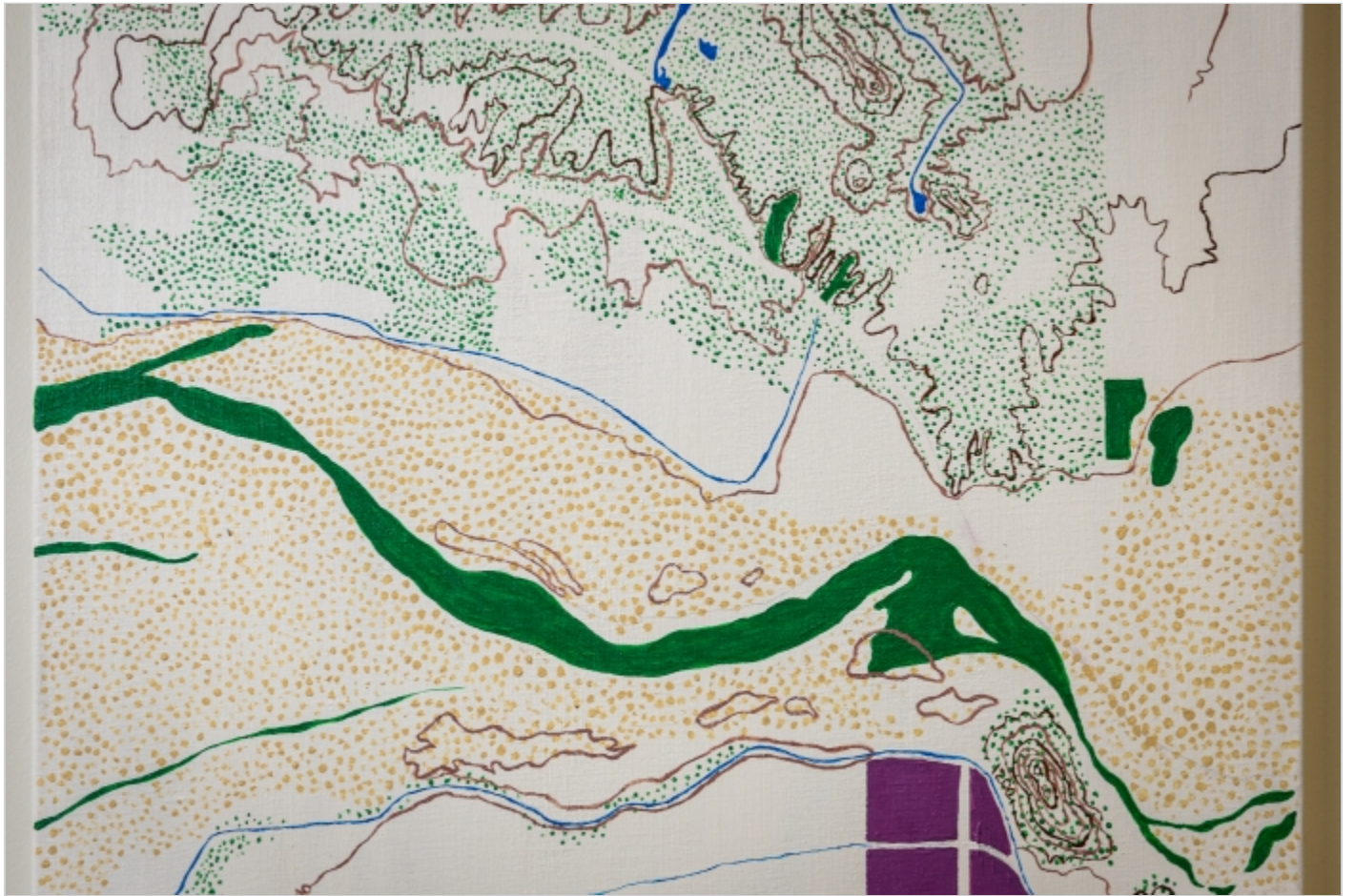
Painting of a 1957 population density map of the Valley. Though the population distribution looks different than it would today, the map outlines the city's grid in the same way.



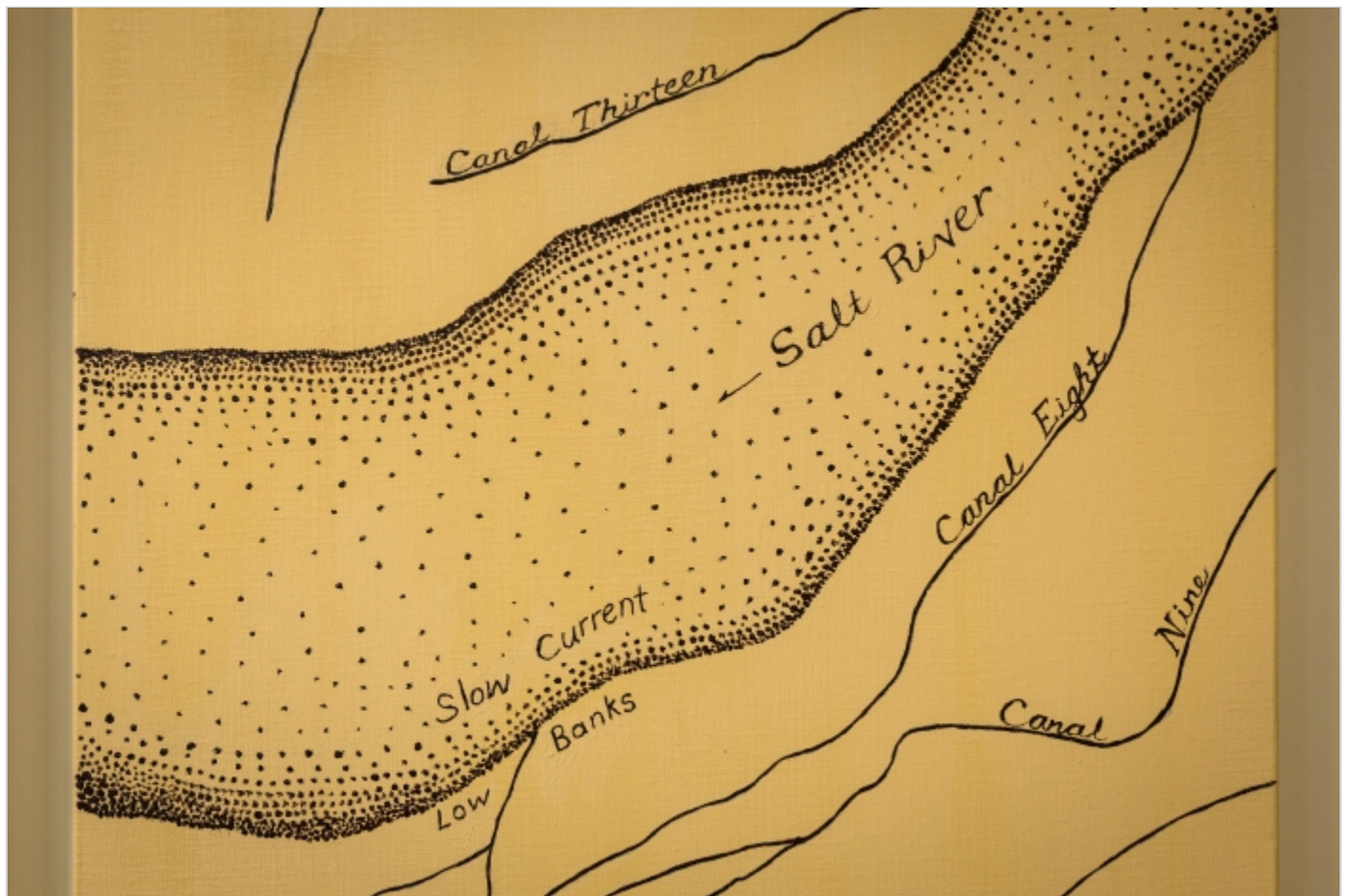
Painting of a modern street map, covering a portion of downtown Phoenix. Rather than focus on street names and locations, the space is used as a grid to orient places of significance to members of the school's community.



Painting of a contemporary heat map showing the distribution of temperatures across a portion of the Valley. Cooler colors, such as green and blue, represent lower average temperatures, while warmer colors, such as yellow, orange and red, represent higher average temperatures.



Painting of a 1940s–50s topographic map depicting the Papago Park area. At the bottom of the panel, Tempe city limits from the the time are illustrated in purple.



The mural ends with a painting in the same mid-1920s hand-drawn archeological map style outlining of the Valley's original canal system. The map depicts prehistoric irrigation canals throughout the area.