

# The Salt Lake Tribune

## Dozens of murals are making Salt Lake City ‘a free outdoor museum’



By Sean P. Means

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For Jann Haworth, executing her latest mural depends on how fast she can lay down paint.

Haworth and her crew spent a recent Sunday morning rolling out magenta paint on asphalt, then adding a layer of tiny glass beads — “This is more like ground glass; it’s really terrifying,” she said — then pressing another roller over it to make sure the beads embed themselves in the paint.

All this had to be done within two minutes, she added, before the paint dried in the August sun. “It’s a trailblazing experience,” said Haworth, who plans to continue work on the mural this weekend. The crosswalk mural will be unveiled on Saturday, Aug. 24, on the pavement between the Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center, at 138 S. 300 South, and the parking lot next to Squatter’s Pub. The unveiling will be part of the center’s annual Rose Exposed event, which celebrates the dance, theater and music organizations that call the center home.

### **ROSE EXPOSED: #TRENDING**

The seventh annual Rose Exposed is a spotlight for the arts organizations — the Gina Bachauer piano competition, Plan-B Theatre, PYGmalion Theatre Company, Repertory Dance Theatre, Ririe-Woodbury Dance Theatre, SB Dance — that use the Rose Wagner Center.

**Where** • Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center, 138 W. 300 South, Salt Lake City

**When** • Saturday, Aug. 24, 8 p.m.

**Admission** • \$15; visit [artix.artsaltlake.org](http://artix.artsaltlake.org) or the box office

It’s also a chance for Haworth, who helped create one of pop art’s most enduring images — the album cover of The Beatles’ “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” — to add another work of

street art to a city that has embraced murals as a vibrant part of its culture.

The dozens of murals on the walls in and around Salt Lake City, Haworth said, are “a free outdoor museum, with photo ops and interactive moments that suit our cultural media today.”

“A mural is evidence that someone is really thinking about a street, a wall or a neighborhood in a different way,” said Dee Brewer, executive director of the Downtown Alliance. “They animate an urban landscape that was previously boring or invisible or hostile.”

### **READERS: ADD TO OUR MURAL MAP**

The Salt Lake Tribune is expanding its interactive map of murals in and around the Salt Lake City area, and we want your help.

If there's a mural you love, look on the map to see if we have included it. If we haven't, send us a photo of it and the address — and, if you know it, the name of the artist and the mural's title.

A couple of rules: The mural should be clearly visible from the street, sidewalk or a publicly used parking area — nothing indoors, or on inaccessible private property. And, please, nothing that's a logo or an overt advertisement for a business or product.

Email your submissions to [features@sltrib.com](mailto:features@sltrib.com), and put the words “Mural Map” in the subject line.

Street art goes back to the graffiti artists of the 1980s, Haworth said, tagging subway cars in cities like New York and London. “It was the bad boys around town, doing it for free, and there is still that ethic attached to it,” she said. “We’re the feeble ones, the muralists, compared to the true graffiti artists.”

Graffiti became criminalized, she said, and there are still remnants of the attitude that street artists are up to no good. (Notice how most art-supply stores keep the spray paint in locked cases.)

“Every art movement worth its salt really annoys people at the beginning,” Haworth said. “Graffiti certainly can be said to have done that.”

## **An art gateway**

Haworth, in 2004, created one of the groundbreaking murals in downtown Salt Lake City: “SLC Pepper,” on the outside of a parking garage on 400 West, a block north of Pioneer Park. The mural established the California-born, British-trained Haworth’s place in Utah’s art community.

Working with other local artists, Haworth created an homage to the landmark “Sgt. Pepper’s” album cover, which she designed with her then-husband, the pop artist Peter Blake.

For the Salt Lake City version, the lineup included such famous faces as author Toni Morrison, singer Bjork, rock star Jimi Hendrix, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, labor icon Cesar Chavez and cartoon mom Marge Simpson. (Not all the figures had staying power; disgraced U.S. Sen. Al Franken, then a radio pundit and comedy writer, is on the wall.)

Arizona-based muralist Gina Ribaudó said it was cool to see “SLC Pepper” while she painted her “Legends of Rock” mural a block north, at The Gateway shopping complex, in July. It depicts eight icons of rock ’n’ roll, from David Bowie and John Lennon to Freddie Mercury and Prince.

“It was cool to do Janis Joplin, and The Beatles are always a good one to do,” Ribaudó said, adding that she worked three weeks on the rock stars’ expressionist, color-splashed faces.

The rockers, on the wall outside California Pizza Kitchen, look out toward another Ribaudó mural: A painting of comedian Don Rickles, on the wall of Wiseguys Comedy Club.

The Gateway has become a focal point of mural art, with 11 works on walls and skybridge overhangs. The complex's owners have hired both local and international artists to create everything from geometric sego lilies to a line-art portrait of Salt Lake City-born movie legend Loretta Young. Some works, like the angel wings (designed in house) at the corner of 100 South and Rio Grande Avenue, are ready-made for selfies and social-media exposure.

Provo-based artist Havoc Hendricks had created a mural in Jackson Hole, Wyo., that drew the attention of The Gateway's owners. So Hendricks was hired to create something in Salt Lake City in the same topographical style.

After looking at several locations around the shopping center, Hendricks chose a corner above the north escalators. "I felt it was a highly visible location," Hendricks said. "It's at that bottleneck area, where the street spills out into the [Olympic Legacy Fountain]."

Hendricks also liked how the pillars around the escalators worked with his topographical mountain ranges, to “add to that illusion that you’re looking up at these huge mountains that are being supported by pillars, clear up into the sky.”

## **A grand stage**

Murals, Hendricks said, “are kind of a trend right now in our culture.” Some works are better than others, he said, and it will take time for residents to learn the difference.

“One of the highest visual-quality murals in the world,” Hendricks said, is a three-story portrait of the Virgin Mary, looking out peacefully over 200 South in downtown Salt Lake City.

“Ave Maria” was created in 2010 by international street artists Miles MacGregor and Marquis Lewis, who go by the names El Mac and Retna. (By coincidence, “Ave Maria” was created just weeks after another street-art superstar, the elusive British artist Banksy, left three works on walls in Park City, where he premiered his documentary “Exit Through the Gift Shop” at the Sundance Film Festival.)

“Ave Maria,” Brewer of the Downtown Alliance said, “is absolutely iconic.” Not only have other artists painted works in the alleyways adjoining that mural, but the neighborhood has become a nightlife destination, with the streetwear store Fice Gallery, Este Pizza, Bar X and the Beer Bar.

“That mural really was part of defining that stretch, that district, differently,” Brewer said.

Another player in defining downtown Salt Lake City’s mural landscape, Brewer said, is the Utah Jazz. The National Basketball Association franchise commissioned two major murals last season: One, by South African artist Karabo Poppy, on the side of Valter’s Osteria on 300 South near 200 West; the other, Salt Lake City artist Trent Call’s history-laden “40 Seasons,” on Main Street near the Zions Bank at 100 South.

“This is the community’s team,” said Bart Sharp, the Jazz’s senior vice president for marketing. “We recognized there was a very passionate and very talented arts and cultural community out there.” Partnering with artists, he said, was a way “to put Utah and Salt Lake City, hopefully, on a more grand stage.”

The Jazz invited Poppy to Salt Lake City “to spend some time with some of the players, and talk about what inspired her,” Sharp said. “Some of our players shared some of the things, from an artistic standpoint, that inspired them.”

The connection with art wasn’t limited to the two murals. Call created a temporary mural on wood panels that was on display in Vivint Smart Home Arena during the playoffs. And the Jazz hired The Blocks, the Downtown Alliance’s cultural campaign, to get a local artist to produce screen prints on T-shirts for fans outside the arena.

The mural of Jazz forward Donovan Mitchell that went up at The Gateway was the shopping center’s idea, Sharp said, though Mitchell did attend the unveiling ceremony in March.

## **Adding character**

Mural art isn’t limited to downtown Salt Lake City. The trend has spread out to the Granary District, the 900 South corridor, and the Sugar House neighborhood. Perhaps the area where murals have made the biggest impact is South Salt Lake.

“I had a huge passion for using public art, and especially murals, as a way to engage communities and revitalize neighborhoods,” said Lesly Allen, executive director of the South Salt Lake Arts Council.

Allen said she talked about public art ideas with Derek Dyer, executive director of the Utah Arts Alliance, which runs the annual Urban Arts Festival every September. “The city has no money, especially for public art,” Dyer said. “I said, ‘I bet we could add a lot of public art to that part of the city, quickly and cheaply, by creating murals.’”

The goal, Allen said, was finding ways “to bring attention, and a sense of identity and character, to downtown South Salt Lake,” an area generally spanning from the 2100 South TRAX stop to the water tower just south of Interstate 80.

Thus was born Mural Fest, an annual event in May in which street artists create 10 murals at various South Salt Lake businesses. In the event’s two years, Utah artists such as as Haworth, Call, Chuck Landvatter, Matt Monsoon, Roger Whiting, Evan Jed

Memcott, Veronica Zak, Traci O'Very Covey and Josh Scheuerman have created murals, often at rates well below their usual commission fee.

One nationally known artist, who goes by the name Arcy, came to South Salt Lake to create a mural for the Level Crossing Brewery near the water tower.

“He showed up in the middle of the night, he slept in his truck, he didn't want to talk to anybody. He did that mural in two days, it's all done with spray paint. And then he literally just kind of snuck away in the middle of the night,” Allen said. “We paid him \$3,000. He drove all the way from Connecticut, rented a Lyft, paid for his own paint.”

Mural art, Allen said, “creates this cool factor for your city. ... It appeals to everybody. And the best part about it is it's free.”

For artists like Shae Petersen, one appeal of murals is their size. Petersen, who's based in Salt Lake City but works around the country under the tag SRILART, created two of the most massive murals in the Salt Lake area. Both feature Greek gods: “Atlas,” a five-story-tall mural at the Hardware Apartments near West High School; and “Zeus,” a 100-foot-wide work on the side of the Stone Unlimited building on 300 West just off 3300 South.

“Scale allows you to do a lot more, just with composition,” Petersen said. “Some of these walls, which are 100 feet long or 60 feet tall, [allow] you to spread out and adjust the composition to either fit the space or incorporate more detail. Scale gives you more freedom.”

Salt Lake City’s mural scene has room to improve, Petersen said. “We’re still a few years behind other cities,” he said. “We’re not quite seeing the level in Salt Lake that you do in other cities — in talent, but also scale. A lot of it is still pretty small, pretty constrained.”

## **More to come**

More murals are in the offing. Dyer said he’s been approached by businesses that want to hire artists. “We thought this might happen, where if we did put up murals, new business owners and property owners would feel like they’re the odd duck out if they don’t have a mural on their building,” he said.

Sharp said the Jazz are looking at what the team will do this season, and may go outside Salt Lake City. “[The Jazz] represent an entire state, not just a city,” Sharp said.

Near Haworth's crosswalk, work will begin this month on another mural at Squatter's Pub for the brewery's 30th anniversary. Pat Bagley, The Salt Lake Tribune's editorial cartoonist, is designing the new mural, and a label for a limited-run beer — both to be unveiled Sept. 8, at Squatter's anniversary beer festival.

Salt Lake City is “a unique city,” Haworth said, and murals can help keep it that way. A mural creates “a moment of something original, that isn't a multiple. It's only there, it's only then, of that moment. It makes people feel very present in the place that they are.”

For Dyer, “being surrounded by art ... just makes life better and makes people happier. And it makes us a more thoughtful and cultured society.”

*Coverage of downtown Salt Lake City arts groups is supported by a grant from The Blocks, a cultural initiative of Salt Lake City and Salt Lake County.*



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