

MURALING *Austin*

MURALS BACKGROUNDER + KEY MURALS

Production by: Nelda Studios Production, *airing on Austin PBS*

www.muralingaustin.com

BRIEF HISTORY OF MODERN DAY AMERICAN MURALS

Muraling dates back to 30,000 BC and some of the earliest murals can be found in the Chauvet cave paintings in France. Modern murals in the U.S. emerged from Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, believed to be inspired by famous Mexican painter Diego Rivera's piece *Detroit Industry* (1932-33) at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Roosevelt created the Federal Arts Program in 1935 in an effort to support artists in need of employment, as well as integrate practical arts into communities.

Austin, Texas, has its own history of murals and a vibrant community of artists and organizers that sustain it. Austin's first modern mural dates back to 1950, located at the University Baptist Church and created by a University of Texas professor. The piece titled *Creation* by Seymour Fogel, a former apprentice to Rivera, initially shocked viewers but was later embraced. Austin's economic downturn in the '90s sparked a downtown revitalization initiative by the city's business owners. In 2020 those efforts evolved, and the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation was created to ignite the potential of Austin's downtown through public art and creative placemaking. Today, Austin has hundreds of murals created by a multitude of artists that reflect the city's vibrant culture.

KEY MURALS FEATURED IN MURALING AUSTIN

Episode 1: "Pride of Place" airing at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, March 24th on Austin PBS

The Beauty of Liberty and Equality (2020)

Artists: Sandra Chevrier; Shepard Fairey (Obey Giant)

1. [Link to photo](#) | Photo credit: Alan Lessig

The Beauty of Liberty and Equality on the west facade of The LINE hotel in the heart of downtown Austin, Texas, was a collaboration between Canadian artist Sandra Chevrier and American street artist/graphic designer Shepard Fairey to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. The striking 12-story mural depicts a woman wearing a mask with Wonder Woman breaking a chain, reflecting the struggle of the women's suffrage movement. Fusing both artists' styles, the design's iconography celebrates the strides in women's rights and the power of the vote in the U.S.

About the artists:

Sandra Chevrier is a self-taught Canadian contemporary artist based in Montreal. A graduate of the University of Quebec in Montreal with a degree in visual and media arts, she is known for her female-focused work with commentary about society's expectations of women and the narratives that surround it. Her work portrays a sensitive and detailed glimpse into power and struggle and the humanity that sits just below the mask.

Shepard Fairey, known by his artist name, Obey Giant, is a contemporary artist, graphic designer, activist, and clothing designer based in the Los Angeles area. A native of Charleston, South Carolina, he attended the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. Described as one of the most influential street artists in the world, he is a renowned muralist whose work and exhibitions can be seen across the United States and in countries across the globe.

Protectors of the Red Bluff (2022)

Artist: Ruben Esquivel

2. [Link to photo](#) | Photo credit: Alan Lessig

Community activists and brothers Raymond, Pete, and Gilbert Rivera are commemorated in *Protectors of the Red Bluff* for their work to designate the East Austin Red Bluff area of Austin, Texas, as a nature preserve. This sprawling 60 x 80-foot section of the 900-foot Bolm Road mural was painted by the activists' nephew, Ruben Esquivel. The artist pays homage to his family's history with Ganado geometric motifs and a large monarch butterfly — a metaphor for Mexican immigrants traveling north.

About the artist:

Austin native Ruben Esquivel is an artist, muralist, canvas artist, designer, and event producer. In 2021 he founded the creative management and consulting agency East End Eclectic. Esquivel studied art history abroad and brought those skills back home to Texas in order to immerse himself in various areas of the arts field. He aims to put a spotlight on people of color and their experiences through art. His work often features vibrant color palettes, and his portraits highlight indigenous people and people of color.

The Pillars Project: Our History Our Trail (2019, 2021)

Artists: Samara Barks (2021), Amado Castillo III (2021), Chroma Collective (2021), Will Hatch Crosby (2019), Ruben Esquivel (2021), Anabel Gómez (2021), Sadé Channell Lawson (2021), Armando Martinez (2019), Raymond "Rage" Mendoza (2021), J. Muzacz (2019), Carmen Rangel (2019), Kendrick Rudolph (2019), Reji Thomas (2019), Serena Tijerina (2021), Lakeem Wilson (and students 2021)

3. [Link to photo](#) | Photo credit: Alan Lessig

The 15 murals that make up "The Pillars Project: Our History Our Trail" were commissioned and curated by the Austin Parks Foundation, Raasin in the Sun, the City of Austin, Public City, and the Mueller Foundation to honor East Side individuals considered pillars of the community. Each artist painted a mural recognizing noteworthy local people and brought their stories to the Pleasant Valley Road Underpass alongside the East Link Trail in Austin, Texas.

Episode 2: “Women Rising” airing at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, March 31st on Austin PBS

Reconnect Yourself (2020)

Artist: NIZ

4. [Link to photo](#) | Photo credit: Alan Lessig

Reconnect Yourself, by local artist NIZ, shows the mirror image of a young woman – one part representing the physical self and the other the spiritual self. The mural was commissioned as part of the “Be Well” campaign, a large-scale 10,000-square-foot mural project launched in 2020 by the City of Austin’s Art in Public Places program and the local nonprofit Raasin in the Sun to share uplifting messages about mental and physical health during the height of the pandemic. The mural encourages drivers passing through the South Lamar Underpass in Austin, Texas, to connect with their inner strength.

About the artist:

NIZ is a self-taught muralist and portrait artist based in Austin, Texas. Named the “Queen of Stencil Art” by the *Austin American-Statesman*, she specializes in large-scale stencil murals and portraiture. Originally from Lima, Peru, NIZ has been painting murals in Austin for the past 12 years. She is a member of “Few and Far Women,” the largest collective of female street artists in the world. Her work often explores themes of femininity, divinity, nature, social justice, Latin identity, and music. Her diverse artistic catalog includes everything from unique paintings on skateboards to fully painted pickleball courts, full-scale murals on the sides of buildings, to psychedelic portraits with dynamic twists.

Viva la Vida (2019)

Artist: ULOANG

5. [Link to photo](#) | Photo credit: Alan Lessig

Artist ULOANG pays tribute to legendary Mexican artist Frida Kahlo in this colorful East 6th Street mural in Austin, Texas. Named after Kahlo’s last painting, *Viva la Vida*, which translates to “long live life,” the portrait celebrates Kahlo’s resilience and many contributions to the art world. The mural includes cultural symbols and local flora and fauna from Mexico and Austin to honor the generations of Mexican families who settled in the neighborhood.

About the artist:

Luis Angulo, known by his artist name ULOANG, is a multi-medium artist based in Austin, Texas. He received his BFA from the Arts Institutes and holds an MFA from the University of Hartford. In addition to his work as a muralist and curator, he is also an accomplished sculptor. He was born in Caracas, Venezuela, and moved to the states when he was eleven years old. He co-founded *Looking Up Mural Fest*, an international mural festival hosted yearly in Austin, TX. In his work, he explores themes such as politics, pop culture, and historical figures. His murals often offer commentary and interact with the environment around them; this, in combination with pop culture figures and dynamic colors, gives us a thought-provoking and unique walk down any block with his work.

It’s Okay Not to Be Okay (2020)

Artist: Sadé Channell Lawson

6. [Link to photo](#) | Photo credit: Alan Lessig

In Sadé Channell Lawson’s mural *It’s Okay Not to Be Okay*, a woman is shown expressing three different emotions. This vivid triad of feminine figures represents the empowerment of experiencing the full range of human emotions. Commissioned by the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation as part of its inaugural “Writing on the Walls” series in 2020, the thought-provoking mural is located at the South Entrance of the South Lamar Underpass in Austin, Texas.

About the artist:

Born and raised in Texas, Sadé Channell Lawson has been painting murals since 2018. She began her journey with acrylics and watercolors, and later evolved into large-scale murals. She is known as a quiet artist whose bright, dynamic visuals speak louder than words. Her work explores themes such as mental health, women's issues, and introspection. Common images throughout her work include feminine figures, flowers, and other natural fauna.

Episode 3: "Big, Bright & Bold" airing at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, April 7th on Austin PBS

Paradise Found (2021)

Artist: Zuzu

7. [Link to photo](#) | Photo credit: Alan Lessig

Paradise Found, by artist Zuzu, is located on the WET Deck of the W Austin hotel in Austin, Texas. The mural's large tropical botanicals and florals transform a 30 x 10-foot blank concrete wall next to the hotel's outdoor pool into a lively backdrop for sun-seekers to enjoy. Zuzu uses her signature palette of pink, complemented by teals and yellow, to create an idyllic world that brightens and uplifts.

About the artist:

Kelly Zuzu Perkal, also known as Zuzu, is an Austin-based muralist & modern mixed-media artist with a degree in creative advertising from The University of Texas at Austin. Voted Austin's best muralist in both 2021 and 2022, her colorful and iconic work is immediately recognizable around the city. Her work is known for its vibrant colors, positive messaging, and unique designs. She frequently collaborates with other artists and lends her skills to large-scale public art projects. She is known for her large-scale public murals as well as smaller-scale canvas work. She is on the board of directors for the HOPE campaign, an Austin-based nonprofit organization spearheading projects and programs to make beautiful art, create meaningful programs and projects, and so much more.

Virtual Hike (2021)

Artist: Soledad Fernandez-Whitechurch

8. [Link to photo](#) | Photo credit: Alan Lessig

Artist Soledad Fernandez-Whitechurch's *Virtual Hike* pays tribute to an area once known as Austin's Enchanted Forest, a famed gathering spot for Austin's artists and creatives originally inhabited by Native Americans. Located on the garage of the Bouldin Commons office complex in Austin, Texas, her mural was inspired by the history and topography of the area's land. She references the hues and shapes of topographic maps, natural vegetation, and rocks she collected while walking the land.

About the artist:

Soledad Fernandez-Whitechurch is a self-taught artist based in Austin who was raised between Argentina, Paraguay, and the United States. Inspired by her Latin roots and global upbringing, she uses her work as an expression that transcends language. She is known for her beautifully abstract paintings and murals, which often portray landscapes or skies in contrasting colors that elevate their environment. Her work can be seen around the city of Austin as well as decorating the walls of local businesses and establishments.

Where the Wildflowers Grow (2022)**Artist: DAAS****9. [Link to photo](#) | Photo credit: Alan Lessig**

Where the Wildflowers Grow, standing 60 feet tall and 12 feet wide in a downtown office complex, is global artist DAAS' largest mural in Austin, Texas. Created by covering large aluminum panels with native wildflowers of Texas, the towering mural was inspired by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The wildflowers represent human resilience in the face of adversity – much like Texas' wildflowers – which thrive even in the most difficult of environments. The mural reflects DAAS' distinctive colorful style infused with underlying positive messages.

About the artist:

Contemporary artist and muralist DAAS is an accomplished American artist whose work can be seen all over the world. In addition to his work in the USA, he has created murals and installations in Japan, China, Italy, Jordan, Portugal, the Dominican Republic, and Nepal. A native of Jacksonville, Florida, he earned a degree in commercial art and graphic design from Pinellas Technical College in Clearwater, Florida. Early on in his career, his mentor introduced him to large-scale murals. With an emphasis on bold, bright colors and taking inspiration from cubism, origami, and nature, his distinctive style is immediately recognizable. He makes a point to get to know the people and the community in which his pieces will reside in order to emphasize community and shared enjoyment. He has a strong belief that art is for everyone and in the uplifting power of shared public art.

MURALING AUSTIN PRODUCERS:**Director and Producer, Natasha Davison**

Natasha Davison is an award-winning national television producer (WSB, WCVB, CNN, Metromedia), a Drama Desk-winning, and Tony-nominated live theatrical producer, as well as a film producer, director, writer, and choreographer. Recent projects: PBS documentary mini-series, *Muraling Austin*, *The Prom* (Broadway/National Tour/adapted into a feature film on Netflix), *Half Time* (Paper Mill Playhouse), and an upcoming feature film music documentary. She is Head of Production for Nelda Studios, an Austin-based multi-media production company and philanthropic organization with a mission to amplify creativity and the arts. Natasha was the founder, artistic director, and producer of new musical development at Texas Musical Theatre Workshop, hosted at The University of Texas at Austin, bringing Tony-winning creative teams to campus to develop their new musicals. She also had a long tenure as a performer in musicals and television, such as *Cats*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Fame* (MGM), and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Natasha teaches the *Business of Entertainment* for the School of Design and Creative Technologies at The University of Texas at Austin.

Executive Producer, Anne Zeiser

Anne Zeiser is an Emmy Award-winning documentary and social impact producer, journalist, and media strategist who has stewarded series for PBS, produced news for CBS, and created national brands. As the founder of Azure Media, she develops transmedia impact projects with mission media organizations, including PBS, WGBH, BBC, and PRX. Noteworthy projects: *Muraling Austin*, *The Human Face of Big Data*, *Vaccines—Calling the Shots*, *A Place at the Table*, *The Story Exchange*, and *The List*. Previously she oversaw strategy and impact at WGBH for PBS' icons – from *Frontline*, *NOVA*, and *American Experience* to *Antiques Roadshow*, *This Old House*, and *Curious George*. She also co-led specials *Rx for Survival-A Global Health Challenge*, *Evolution*, *National Geographic's Strange Days on Planet Earth*, and *Martin Scorsese Presents The Blues*. Anne was a news producer for CBS/Boston, contributing to *60 Minutes*; a senior marketing executive at MullenLowe and Arnold Worldwide (Cabot); and a government legislative aide. The author of *Transmedia Marketing: From Film and TV to Games and Digital Media*, Anne is a member of the Television Academy.

Executive Producer, Nelda Buckman

Nelda Buckman is a multifaceted professional known for her work in education, philanthropy, and the arts. She is the founder of Nelda Studios, a creative studio dedicated to promoting creativity and providing access to the arts and art education. Nelda Studios has made significant contributions in education, art, and technology, with projects such as *Muraling Austin*, a series on Austin PBS that explores the city's murals and the artists behind them; the Buckman Center at The University of Texas at Austin, a collaborative space for art, design, and technology; and co-producing Broadway shows such as *The Prom*, which earned a Tony nomination. Nelda's commitment to promoting creativity, diversity, and access to the arts has made her a visionary leader. She brings people together and drives positive change, leaving a lasting legacy that inspires artists and audiences alike.

MURALING AUSTIN KEY ORGANIZERS & ART ADVISORS:**Raasin McIntosh**

Raasin McIntosh is a creative philanthropist, community organizer, and Olympian. A native of Houston, she came to Austin as a recruit for the University of Texas Longhorns track and field team. With a degree in Communications, McIntosh is Vice President of Urban Activation at the Downtown Austin Alliance and the Founder CEO of Raasin in the Sun, a local nonprofit organization with a focus on art and community. Her nonprofit aims to use the arts to cultivate community and honor local communities with storytelling, public art and placemaking initiatives. They focus on inspiring, educating, and reinvigorating the communities they serve with their programs and partnerships. Raasin's leadership role in both organizations has led to beautiful public art projects in East Austin and the city at large, such as "The Pillars Project," "Bolm Road Murals Project," "Be Well Murals," "Writing on the Walls," and many more.

Molly Alexander

Visionary executive Molly Alexander has worked in downtown revitalization, economic development, and public art projects for over 30 years. A graduate of Trinity University, she began her career working for the cities of Dallas, Georgetown, and Elgin, Texas, working with elected officials, serving on a Chamber of Commerce, and leading a Main Street Program and Convention and Visitors Bureau. Passionate about bringing out the best in local communities, her tenure at the Downtown Austin Alliance spans from Associate Director to Executive Vice President of Economic Development, then as the Executive Director of the newly-founded Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation from 2018 until 2022. She led the nonprofit to bring in new ideas and initiatives for downtown revitalization to meet the moment in Austin. Molly was also one of the producers of the statewide Emmy award-winning PBS series Downtown (2005-2008). Molly founded ITP Consulting in 2022, where she works with a variety of private and public sector clients and organizations to meet their goals.