



Delvies, mural by Wingchow



EMS Services, mural by Emily Ding



Cordin Company, mural by Chris Peterson

South Salt Lake's

Color Revolution

HOW BLANK WALLS BECAME CANVASES – AND SPARKED A CREATIVE AWAKENING ACROSS THE CITY.

STORY BY TIM GURRISTER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STAN CLAWSON

SOUTH SALT LAKE WAS once a city of gray walls and empty lots – a place drivers passed through on their way somewhere else. But in recent years, a vibrant surge of street art has transformed this industrial corridor into Utah's largest open-air gallery.

Since 2018, more than 80 murals have spread across the city's brick warehouses, breweries and rooftops, creating a colorful patchwork that has redefined South Salt Lake's identity. These giant artworks – some stretching several stories high – turned once-overlooked corners into destinations. Visitors found vivid murals

along Main Street, West Temple and the S Line, each one a fresh invitation to pause, look closer and explore.

Along 2100 South, a pair of landmarks showcased how much the neighborhood had changed. At Mr. Muffler, 105 W. 2100 South, a striking wolf mural prowled across the wall, its gaze fixed on passing cars. Two blocks west, the Freeway Plaza shopping center at 2180 S. 300 West was anchored by a swirling school of trout, splashing up the side of the building in a riot of color.

At Chappell Brewing, 2285 S. Main St., a cheerful script proclaimed: "Darling,

You Are a Work of Art." Nearby, the Regency Apartments at 246 E. 2100 South brightened the neighborhood with bold reds, yellows and blues that flashed past train riders.

Murals even transformed city buildings. The once-plain rear façade of City Hall burst with organic bands of orange, gold and mint green that climbed four stories up the concrete and glass. Inside, staff said the art brought a sense of pride and optimism to their workdays.

Much of the momentum started with Mural Fest, an annual event that brings artists together to paint new works each

spring. The city selects walls, helps fund materials and hosts community gatherings where residents can meet the artists and watch the murals take shape.

Lucia Murdock, who opened a fine arts studio at 153 W. 2100 South the same year the first murals went up, remembered when the area felt drab and overlooked. Her building bloomed with five-foot flowers and painted bees – an installation she didn't commission but felt deeply connected to.

"It just coincidentally matches my heritage and the vibe of the studio," she said. "It makes it easier for people to find us and brings a pop of color to the street."

Across South Salt Lake, murals became wayfinders and conversation starters. At AMI Roofing, 141 W. Haven Ave., a powerful Ute figure in prayer rose above the parking lot, while a cowgirl lounged alongside Interstate 80 at 80 W. Robert Ave., catching the eye of drivers on the overpass.

Business owners often approached the city to request a mural, and sometimes the city reached out first if a building had good visibility. Once a wall was selected, property owners typically contributed a share of the artist's fee. The guidelines were simple: no ads, no hate, no obscenity – and no single theme. The goal was to reflect South Salt Lake's diversity, character and energy.

Salt Lake City artist Trevor Dahl, who painted a mural of a coyote, frog and bluebird nestled around a human skull, believed these public artworks did more than decorate walls. "They manifest a reality where the arts are valued and residents feel their neighborhood is cared for," he said. "It gives South Salt Lake an identity apart from Salt Lake City – a sense of place."

Davia King, who grew up in Orem, often sketched faces of onlookers into her murals using blind contour drawing – capturing their likeness without looking down at her hand. "It is a way of connecting," she said. "All these faces overlapping become a message of humanity coming together."

On sidewalks once ignored, people stopped to take photos or watch artists at work. Neighbors waved to painters on



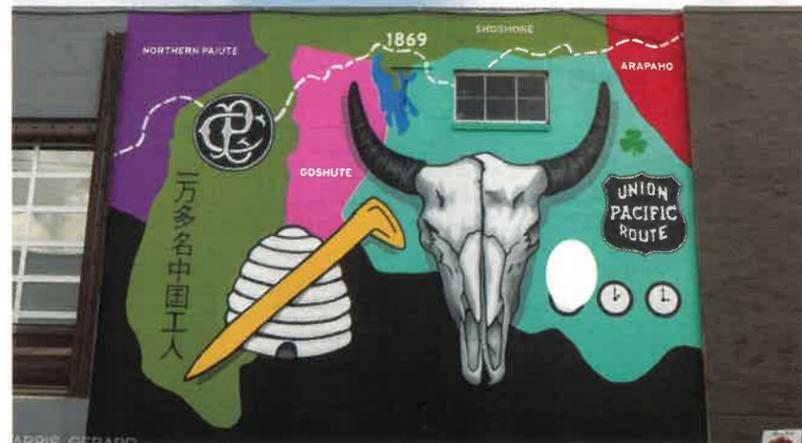
AMI Roofing (south), mural by Rafael Blanco



500 East Station, mural by Michael Murdock



One Burton, mural by Mantra



Beehive Distilling, mural by Trent Call



Technical Service Supply, mural by Miles Toland



Contento Cafe, mural by Himed and Hokzyn



Bonwood Bowl, mural by Brooklyn Ottens and Matt Monsoon



City Hall, mural by DAAS



Square Kitchen Eatery, mural by Egypt

lifts. Murals turned ordinary cinder block walls into landmarks – and helped create a community where creativity felt as much a part of the landscape as the Wasatch Mountains on the horizon.

"Art is one of the most profound ways to create beauty in the civilized world," King said. "If we can't have nature surrounding the buildings, then we paint it." 🐦

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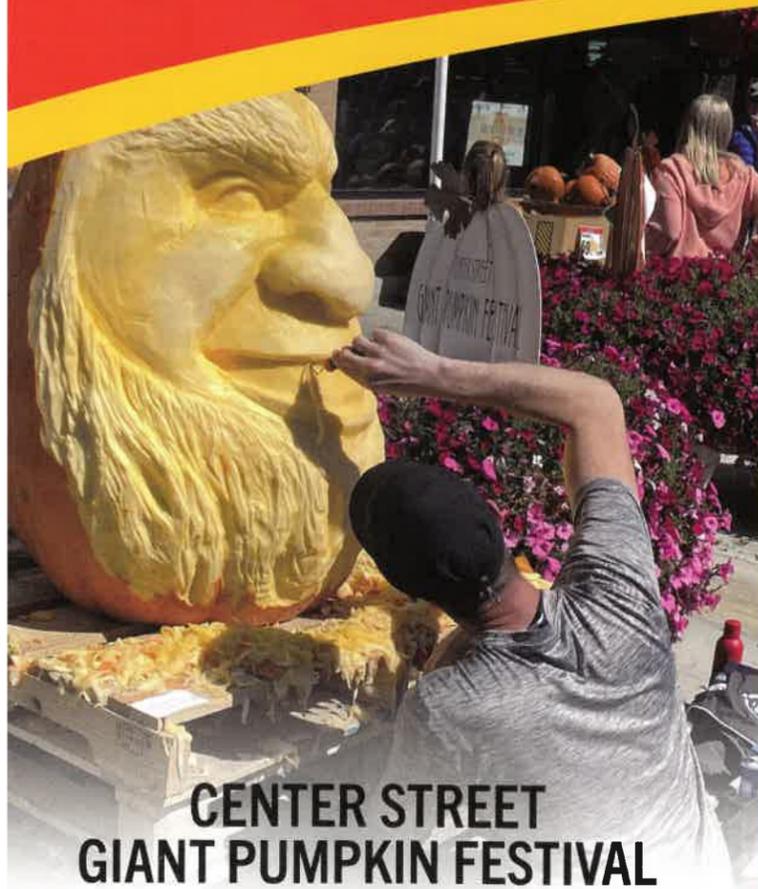


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