

New community mural spotlights North Tulsans

JULY 11, 2024

ARTS & CULTURE

SAM LEVRAULT

Photos, Sam Levrault Media

Elgin underpass transformed into an intersection for community and art.



The project is part of a larger initiative, “Pathway to Hope Public Art Trail” in [The Oklahoma Art in Public Places](https://www.arts.ok.gov/our_programs/Art_in_Public_Places.html) (https://www.arts.ok.gov/our_programs/Art_in_Public_Places.html) program, in partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. The goal of the public works is to honor the history of the Historical Greenwood District with installations starting this summer. Each of the six large scale artworks will be in high traffic areas around Interstate 244 as it runs through Greenwood.

The theme for the Elgin Ave. project is “Hope” with the aim to speak to the hope of reconciliation. The portraits feature North Tulsa figures, spanning generations and experiences. A multi-sensory installation, it includes lights, wooden doors, and QR codes for community interaction connection the community to interviews, information, and more.



Honoree poses with portrait at the "Doorways to Hope" on May 18, 2024. Photo, Sam Levrault Media.



Artists and community members alike paint along the walls of the Elgin Ave. underpass honoring local figures in the Greenwood community in the mural project, "Doorways to Hope" on May 18, 2024. Photo, Sam Levrault Media.

Artwork in the Making

The community murals have been a long time in the making, but the community started seeing the art come to life within the last couple of weeks. Marlon F. Hall and Gordon Huether, alongside artists from [No Parking Studios](https://noparkingstudios.com/) (<https://noparkingstudios.com/>), a North Tulsa-based art collective, and [Black Moon](https://www.blackmoontulsa.com/) (<https://www.blackmoontulsa.com/>), a Tulsa collective of Black Artists, join members of the community to bring art to life on Elgin Ave.



Community members pose with portraits alongside honorees during the public unveiling on June 1, 2024. Photo, **Sam Levrault Media**.



Marlon Hall, a lead artist for the project, presents the "Doorways to Hope" to the community on June 1, 2024. Photo, **Sam Levrault Media**.

Raegene Riggs, an artist within Black Moon, was one of many artists working alongside the community to paint the murals. When thinking over the community's involvement and support for the project, Riggs described it as "overwhelming, in the best way imaginable." The importance of seeing the faces of the people in the community was not lost on Riggs either. "It speaks to generations. We have children



No stranger to the local creative scene, Jerica Wortham, CEO for J'Parlé Artist Group ([JAG Inc. \(https://www.jagtulsa.org/\)](https://www.jagtulsa.org/),) was the curator for the project. Wortham exuded joy when speaking on the experience of seeing familiar faces on the walls: "I am beaming because they deserve this. The thing about these people is they're not overstated. These people have been working tirelessly. They have been working behind the scenes with or without the credit that they deserve. And so for them to have this moment to receive their flowers when they can smell them when they can really experience them is such a beautiful thing to experience. It makes my heart burst."

When asked her thoughts on what brought the community forward, Wortham credited the community itself. She describes the people featured as active and give back, day in and day out.

During the initial launch of the painting in late May, Tulsans were encouraged to come out and join in the creativity. Residents of all ages and creative talents contributed to the project. Friday, May 17, kicked off the festivities as artists sketched the murals along the walls as a kickoff party, hosted by [DJ noname](https://djno.name/) (<https://djno.name/>). The following day, Marlon Hall, a lead artist for the project, guided the community in yoga with live music from musicians Micro Orchestra featuring [Ayilla](https://www.ayilla.com/) (<https://www.ayilla.com/>) & Derek K. Art 4orms Foundation, an organization that provides free art education and wellness opportunities to the public, published Children's coloring books featuring the honorees on the cover.

A few short weeks later, on June 1, the community gathered once again to celebrate the completion of the project. Artists, honorees, and community members came together recognizing and applauding all the hard work and effort put into the project. One common phrase heard among speakers was the insistence for the honorees to "receive their flowers while they are still here to smell them." During the painting process, chairs were placed in front of each portrait holding a single flower representing this very concept. On the reveal day, the very same honorees were seen side-by-side with their portraiture and recognized in front of the community for their commitment and dedication.



Artists and community members alike paint along the walls of the Elgin Ave. underpass honoring local figures in the Greenwood community in the mural project, "Doorways to Hope" on May 18, 2024. Photo, **Sam Levrault Media**.

A Creative Future for Tulsa

"Doorways to Hope" is just one of many art projects coming to downtown Tulsa this year. Five other projects are planned under the Pathway to Hope Public Art Trail. Other installations include: Main Street, Boston Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Detroit Avenue, and Greenwood Avenue.

In addition to the new scenes around the area, hopes and inspiration are also high for the greater creative community moving forward. The murals on Elgin are just a "jumpstart," according to Wortham, towards Tulsa "having a more inclusive art scene that is reflective of all the community members."

Riggs also credits the project with its involvement with the community, "I just I don't know of another project that's pushing for aid for any community the way that this project has pushed for North Tulsa," Citing the multi-sensory experience, Riggs also describes the project as the most important project that Tulsa is going to for a really long time.

The project also saw a collaboration of a size, often unseen, in Tulsa, bringing organizations and people together in new ways. Prior to the murals, Riggs had never worked with No Parking Studios before, she described the connection between the two collectives as family. "we've just been through so much in such a short amount of time and the conversations that we've had through this... it's an unmatched feeling"



place: experience in art. No matter the skill level, the only requirement that was in place to take part in the art was showing up. Riggs emphasized the supportive nature of the local community and summarizing the relationship: “show up for us and we’ll continue to show up for you.”

Support for the local creative community also extends beyond the four walls of the underpass. Community members who wish to support local artists were encouraged to buy artwork and donate to organizations or collectives like Black Moon or JAG Inc. Black Moon regularly offers classes and events, often shared via social media. JAG Inc. has several events throughout the rest of the year, including the annual “[Hotter Than July](https://www.jagtulsa.org/hotter-than-july) (<https://www.jagtulsa.org/hotter-than-july>)” experience on July 20th and the City-Wide Creative Arts Festival this fall.

Honorees:

[Yusuf Etudaiye](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/yusuf-etudaiye/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/yusuf-etudaiye/>) – Artist

[Am’re Ford](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/amre-ford/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/amre-ford/>) – Educator & Musician

[Micah Ezell](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/micah-ezell/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/micah-ezell/>) – Spiritpreneur

[O’Maley B](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/omale-b/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/omale-b/>) – Musician

[Turner Goodrum](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/turner-goodrum/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/turner-goodrum/>) – Photographer

[Billie Parker](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/bille-parker/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/bille-parker/>) – Community Leader

[Deborah McClellan](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/deborah-mcclellan/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/deborah-mcclellan/>) – Educator

[Mary Riggins](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/mary-riggins/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/mary-riggins/>) – Community Leader

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[Poppa Bobby Eaton](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/poppa-bobby-eaton/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/poppa-bobby-eaton/>) – Elder & Griot

[Dr. La Verne Ford Wimberly](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/dr-lavern-ford-wimberly/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/dr-lavern-ford-wimberly/>) – Educator

[Mary Williams](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/mary-l-williams/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/mary-l-williams/>) – Minister, Artist, Community Leader

[Coach Keith Reed Sr.](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/coach-keith-reed-sr/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/coach-keith-reed-sr/>) – Community Leader

[Steph Simon](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/steph-simon/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/steph-simon/>) – Musician

[Rev. Joey Crutcher](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/reverend-joe-crutcher/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/reverend-joe-crutcher/>) – Community Leader

[Caroline “Inspires” Bennet](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/caroline-inspires-bennet/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/caroline-inspires-bennet/>) – Entrepreneur, Artist, Educator

[Ebony Easily](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/ebony-easily/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/ebony-easily/>) – Community Leader

[Maybelle Wallace](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/maybelle-wallace/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/maybelle-wallace/>) – Theatre North Leader

[Greatness Rose](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/greatness-rose/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/greatness-rose/>) – Miracle Baby

[Latoya Rose](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/latoya-rose/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/latoya-rose/>) – Accountant, Speaker, Entrepreneur

[Kode Ransom](https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/kode-ransom/) (<https://doorwaystohopetulsa.com/kode-ransom/>) – Artist Historian

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