



# Morganton, NC, Murals

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This experience not only impacts our community, but also the artists who are being trained by CMI. Artists who participated in the first round of TOSS murals explained the impact on their careers and broader lives. Sachi Dely, shared, "My experience with CMI was life-changing. I made connections and learned a new skill that I can carry on long after the program is over." Mia Loia stated, "I truly enjoyed so many aspects of this residency. It has been one of the most impactful experiences I have been a part of since moving to NC. I have no doubt it will influence the way I engage as a public artist for the rest of my career."

During the beginning stages of the project, artists learned to engage communities and gather input for the design. In May 2024, three artist teams held Community Input Meetings with over 120 Burke County residents to better understand and conceptualize each theme by focusing on collecting personal stories and experiences. You can read more about the input and decision making process for each mural on our website.



Burke County residents were able to participate in bringing the murals to life firsthand in July, 2024, through a Paint Party at Forest Hill Elementary School. TOSS invited the community to participate in the mural production process by using a paint-by-number technique on polytab fabric. Over 240 community members attended. Britt Ruhe, Co-Director of the Community Mural Institute, shared: "Community paint parties are one of our favorite parts of this process. You don't need to have any experience - just show up with your family and friends, ready to help! Once the murals go up, you'll be able to point to a section and say, 'See that part right there? I painted that!'"

Successes rarely come without challenges. TOSS faced a few roadblocks along the way, including:

Site Selection - Securing mural loca-



tions without historic approval requirements caused delays. Two sites, over 70 years old, required reports for the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, adding unexpected time constraints. The big lesson here: plan extra time and always have a backup plan.

Defining the Scope - the mural themes were focused broadly - "Women at Work," "Celebrating the Deaf Community," and "The Future of Work" - to allow for community input. The richness of shared history made narrowing designs difficult, leaving some input behind. This reinforced the importance of clear creative constraints. To honor all contributions, they archived input on their website.

Weather Delays - Hurricane Helene disrupted the installation and ribbon-cutting in October, forcing timelines to be adjusted for safety.

From Mar. 1-7, artists will install the murals, piecing panels together like permanent wallpaper, refining and overpainting seams. If you're nearby, drive by to see the progress!

To sustain this impact, TOSS is developing a documentary and K-12 curriculum exploring cultural care, entrepreneurship, and local history. The murals will also be featured in the Hometown Walkabout Tour, another program of The Industrial Commons, fostering ongoing dialogue about the community.

Morganton Mural Project Ribbon Cuttings: 1) "Rural Features" at 1001 Burkemont Ave., Morganton, NC, on Friday, Mar. 7, from 5-5:45pm; 2) "Signs of the Times" at 408 S. Sterling St., Morganton, NC, on Saturday, Mar. 8, from 10-10:45am; and 3) "Mountain Matriarchs" at 216 E. Union St., Morganton, NC, on Saturday, Mar. 8, from 11-11:45pm.

Parking suggestions include: Western Piedmont Community College - Ample parking off Technology Dr. and Community continued above on next column to the right

College Drive. You must then walk to the "Grassy Commons." Debbie's Embroidery - Park along Sterling Street. Root and Vine - Ample parking behind the movie theater.

We do not plan to have chairs at the ribbon-cutting sites. Each ribbon cutting will be 45 minutes, and if you think a chair might be nice, bring along a lawn chair or folding chair.

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For project overviews and updates, visit ([www.tosstudio.org/murals](http://www.tosstudio.org/murals)).

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