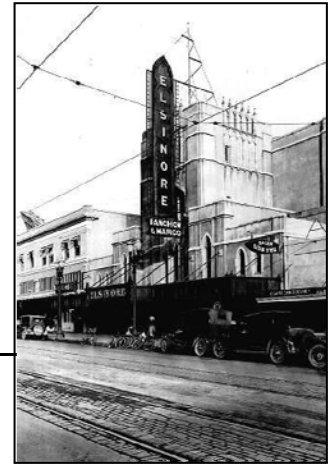


Murals & Wall Graphics

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT / CITY HALL
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Guideline

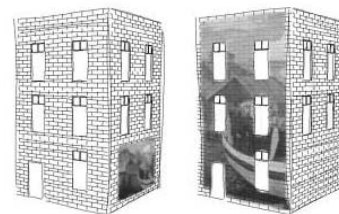
New murals for historic structures should be designed with respect to the building's size, character and features. Significant historic materials and features should be preserved. The new mural should not compromise the historic character or integrity of the original resource. Care should be taken when preparing the surface of the building for painting in order to prevent damage to the structure.

Preparation

- The historic masonry substrate must be identified. Masonry encompasses all types of natural stones, manufactured clay materials (including brick and terra cotta) and cementitious materials, such as cast stone, concrete and mortar. The common trait is that they are porous and sensitive to abrasion. After identifying the masonry, its condition must also be assessed, including its fragility, porosity and permeability. If removal of the existing paint is necessary, surfaces should be cleaned with nonabrasive materials specifically designed for the masonry substrate identified.
- Preparation of the historic building surface for painting should be done carefully. If the masonry is already painted or if there is graffiti on the wall of the historic building, it must be determined whether the mural could be applied over the existing paint. Under no circumstances should the surfaces be power washed. Historic masonry should always be cleaned using the gentlest means possible.

Design

- Wall graphic and mural designs on all buildings are reviewed by the City of Salem. A permit is required.
- Colors should be harmonious with the exterior colors of the building. The City will offer assistance in selecting colors and reviewing the design if requested by the property owner.
- A long term maintenance plan for periodic touch up or repainting is critical for a successful project.



CORRECT MURAL APPLICATION (LEFT)
AND INCORRECT APPLICATION (RIGHT)

Placement

- New murals should respect the size, scale and design of the historic building. They should be located on the side, interior or rear walls of existing commercial buildings, and have minimal impact on surrounding buildings, views and vistas.
- New murals should not obscure significant features of the historic building, and should not be painted over identified historic murals or signage.

- Re-creation of historic wall graphics can be approved administratively.

History of Murals

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many people utilized the sides of buildings to paint signs for their businesses. Some of these signs were over two stories tall, and utilized engaging images to invite patrons to purchase their products.

From 1934 to 1943, the federal government embarked on a unique art patronage program to decorate the walls of newly-built post offices across the United States. The program was meant to inspire people with a sense of pride in the past and hope for the future during the Great Depression, and was initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as part of his New Deal. Themes included regional history and early exploration and settlement. Artists were paid from the one percent construction cost reserved for building decoration.

Salem has many murals; the most famous is certainly the colorful mural gracing the back of the Elsinore Theater. Painted by James Mattingly in 1984 it is a portrait of Theda Bara, Marlene Dietrich, Charlie Chaplin and W.C. Fields; all famous actors or actresses. This was commissioned as part of the restoration project for the theater and is now one of Salem’s most iconic works of art. It was restored as recently as 2013.

Additional Reading

Preservation Brief #38: *Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry*. Washington D.C.: Technical Preservation Services (TPS), Heritage Preservation Services Division, National Park Service. US Department of the Interior. Rev. 1995.

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. Washington, D.C.: Preservation Assistance Division. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, rev. 1983.

City of Salem
Historic Landmarks
Commission
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