



Every quilt tells a story, as fabric, color, technique, and design give a historic account of the artist, the era, and the culture of the day. Paducah, Kentucky, a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts, has embarked on an ambitious project using paintings to inform the world about the relevance and rich history of quilting—Quilt City USA Murals!

The first Quilt City USA Mural premiered on September 13, 2017 at AQS QuiltWeek – Fall Paducah, when the iconic quilt CORONA II, SOLAR ECLIPSE (1989) by Carol Bryer Fallert-Gentry, painted by Lead Artist Char Downs of Pinecone Gallery, was unveiled on the floodwall adjacent to the Schroeder Expo and

Carroll Convention Center. The timely unveiling coincided with the historic celestial solar eclipse in 2017.

“It was exciting for me to recreate in another medium such an amazing example of cutting-edge quilting done by a friend. The design was a visual reminder of an event in the cosmos that would take place with Paducah in the center of its path,” said Downs. Downs devoted nearly 700 hours recreating CORONA II in her studio/gallery in Paducah’s Lower Town Arts District. As evidenced by this premier mural, quilts for this outdoor 24/7 public art project are painted in a fabric-like, photorealistic style, showing color gradations and stitching to create an illusion that fools the eye.



Paint is applied to nonwoven parachute cloth (Pellon) that is later adhered to the concrete floodwall like wallpaper in a highly durable and fade-resistant process.

Quilting and mural painting are both ancient and modern art forms that have become fascinating community records. As early as the Stone Age, wall paintings informed us of the evolution of cultures. Likewise, the history of America can be seen in the history of quilts—from the early settlers to the Civil War, the Industrial Revolution, the Bicentennial Celebration of 1976, and beyond. As more quilts fill the floodwall, Quilt City USA Murals will serve as a visual history and become a captivating educational program on quilts and quilting.

“The first quilt documentation project in the world was The Kentucky Quilt Project—a survey movement that began in 1981 and quickly spread across the United States and beyond,” said former Paducah mayor Gayle Kaler, who initially envisioned the program in 2016. “As an UNESCO Creative City, we want to continue to be that beacon, that storyteller of how the past informs the present...how our early ancestors brought us their functional crafts and handwork, and how advances in technology have affected our lives today.”

Upcoming quilts for Quilt City USA Murals will be historic or antique in nature, reflect educational/humanitarian/environmental relevance, or have an iconic provenance to their time in history like CORONA II. A Quilt Selection Committee, chaired by AQS Show Director Bonnie Browning, has selected quilts for future murals that tell a compelling story and expand the scope of the project, including BABY BLOCKS CRIB QUILT (ca. 1860) from the Pilgrim/Roy Collection with campaign ribbons from Henry Clay’s run for President in 1944 and PRECIOUS WATER by Hollis Chatelain, a contemporary art quilt characterizing the water crises in South Africa.

Our objective is to give every quilter and fine craft enthusiast a sense of his or her own place in history through Quilt City USA Murals in Paducah, Kentucky. Friends and AQS Members can nominate a quilt and/or donate to the project by visiting the PaducahQuiltMurals.org website.