Community Mural Project

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University of Utah; Department of Art and Art History students have been given an opportunity to create murals along the I-15 corridor. This project is supported through a grant from the City of South Salt Lake and UTA. The creation of a public work of art begins with research. Art in the community is successful when artists work in conjunction with members of the community to share ideas, dreams and communicate them by means of visual art. The class began by investigating possible themes and research into the history of Utah to find possible community building ideas. We also met with integral members of the City of South Salt Lake City such as the current and former mayor of South Salt Lake to help us better understand the community. The conceptual ideas were then transformed into visual maquettes. The maquettes were displayed during the Harvest Days Festival at the South Salt Lake Columbus Center where community members voted on their favorites. As artists members of the community were given a voice and a personal investment to future community murals.

“So what do they do, just teach you to paint really big?”

This is the reaction often encountered by students taking the mural class by the public, and probably a very warranted inquiry. “Painting big,” as you would have it, is a “big painting.” Once the idea and design are developed, the only thing left to do is slap it on the side of a building. The “Golden Spike” mural is 100 feet long and 25 feet tall, and slapping it on is an intricate process. A fearless dedicated team of daredevils, also known as art students, clamber 20 feet up rickety scaffolding with paint in tow, just feet from speeding commuter trains. Students scale the art to fit the wall, creating a grid for the design on the wall in scaled squares, and transferring the linear drawing square by square, each one a piece to the puzzle. Then it’s a matter of painting our hearts out, first painting a complementary color to intensify the subsequent layers of color. All culminating in a really “big painting.”