

Article – The Power of The Mural

From the great cities around the world to the smallest towns and villages, murals have always been an artistic expression that brings art to life. They tell stories, reveal history, create excitement, revive, and add colour to main streets and ultimately showcase artistic imagination and creativity.

Andrew Lewis (www.alewisdesign.com) is an internationally recognized Canadian art director-designer acknowledged for award-winning corporate identities, branding, packaging, poster art, and multi-media applications. He has a wide-ranging portfolio of prestigious clients including Canada Post, the Royal Canadian Mint, Scotiabank, Starbucks Coffee, and VISA just to name a few. To date, Andrew Lewis Design has designed in excess of 1000 posters, 150 brands and continues to explore new forms of visual communication and fine art...including large murals. And full disclosure, he is also my younger brother.

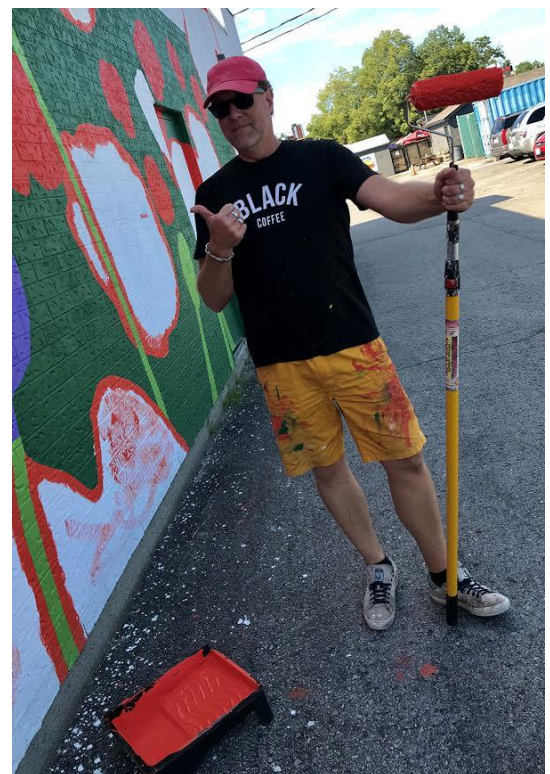
In early 2020, he learned of an opportunity in St. Thomas, Ontario in which some money had been generously bequeathed by a local family for a number of community projects. Consequently, a number of artists were commissioned to create murals within the main business district of the city.

From this, Andrew Lewis selected a massive 2500 square foot wall that would eventually become the colourful canvas entitled **“Heroes”**. The massive and larger than life sweeping image of poppies in a field would be located across from and in clear view of the city’s Veteran’s Memorial Gardens, providing a wonderful backdrop and reminder of sacrifice and honour. It would also be a lasting reminder of strength and resilience in a year of great challenge for all Canadians as COVID-19 had also become a war we had all united and come together to fight.

I sat down with my brother to learn more about the project and process.

What was your inspiration for “Heroes”?

Initially, I produced a very contemporary and modern design, something that was very fresh for this community. After another site visit, the Veterans Memorial adjacent to the wall became the focus of my attention. The mural is a dedication to all Veterans and First Responders depicted in a field of growing poppies. This image also represents a community that rises up to meet all ongoing challenges with an unconquerable spirit of courage. It is a celebration of both our heroes and life itself.



Briefly, how did the creative process come together from initial drawings to completed work?

I always start every project with drawing, always. Small pencils drawings then migrate to the computer and I build digital illustrations. These digital files I could project onto the wall (with accurate measurements) then traced by me and my assistants. Then comes the process of layers colours painted onto the primed wall. Each colour has two coats, so really, we painted the mural twice!

People may not always find time to enter galleries, so outside murals effectively brings art to the people. Do you think murals can lead to a greater appreciation of art and the arts in general and can it stimulate interest and appreciation of art in younger people?

Public art, if it is good can generate, I think, enormous excitement within a community, sometimes equal to or more than galleries. This excitement does in fact open up the public's awareness and imagination to seeing their community is a new fresh light. Younger people naturally gravitate toward exciting new things, murals certainly are one of them and there is a huge opportunity to increase art appreciation as well as art involvement within the city itself.



Finally, what would be some of the benefits for municipalities and communities to encourage and support murals in their community?

I have seen it firsthand how (if done well), murals engage, invigorate, and grow urban centres economic growth. Also, they have created exciting destination locations for tourism and feed the energy for bricks and mortar businesses. That is something we have to do now more than ever because of online sales during COVID-19 but also the future of retail needs to reinvent itself to stay alive, and inner-city murals will help that certainly. The key to a great mural is something that doesn't date itself, appeals to every age, and engages your imagination every time you see it again. That is a very challenging list to check off!

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