

THE OF LABONTE PARK

A question was posed to Laramie during the summer of 2020: “What do you love about LaBonte Park?”

Answers ranged from mountain lion sightings to the smell of the affectionately nicknamed “Stink Lake.” These submitted stories created a rich tapestry for artist Conor Mullen to weave together an artwork inspired by and created for the community. Conor talks to us about the work, *Salamander Stink* and *The Haunted Handshake*, below.



This is your first mural. What lessons did you learn?

The physical aspects of creating this mural generated most of the lessons learned for me. I've helped to facilitate creative group projects in the past, but I've never installed a piece of artwork at this size before. I learned a lot about drawing at a larger scale, working on a curved surface, and working on a surface that faces interesting weather patterns year-round.

There is a lot of preparation that goes into getting a surface ready for paint/artwork. I couldn't have done all that prep without the help of friends. I also learned about time management and planning for unforeseen delays/obstacles (for example high winds, poor air quality, and exhaustion). I hope this isn't my last mural, but I'm glad to have time off before the next one!

Why include the community in the mural process?

Including community members and representatives of some of Laramie's most ardent social services was important to the mural process because I think it speaks to the power of inclusion. The mural stands today as a symbol of inclusion through the process that made it and its imagery a reality. People seem to really like the mural, and I think that's a direct result of it being community-informed. It was important to the mural team and myself, to provide an example of what inclusion can produce in terms of creativity and decision-making in the public sphere.



What story do you hope shines through?

I hope there are multiple stories taken away from the artwork. I hope the title brings a smirk to passersby, out of some really difficult and strange times. I hope that the wildlife featured in the mural reminds our community of our shared existence here in Laramie. I hope that the small tributes to friends like Robbie Ramirez and Jeremy Zubik help to memorialize their contributions to our town. I hope that the mural's details affirm memories for some, and inspire a bit of wonder for others. I hope that *Salamander Stink* and *The Haunted Handshake* helps folks to celebrate unity and diversity in the same space, because despite the possible disjointed look of the mural's design, I think there's a strong sense of togetherness there.

LARAMIE PUBLIC ART COALITION + CITY OF LARAMIE
PARKS AND RECREATION

Advisory Team: Feeding Laramie Valley, Friends of the Laramie Skatepark, Laramie Interfaith, Laramie Youth Crisis Center

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More artwork info at laramiepublicart.org/projects