

Rooftop 'Tree of Life' mural dedication is Sunday

Local artist
Beth English
completes art
atop church

By Meagan Rhodes
The Tennessean

Murals have been popping up all over Nashville lately — from Randy Purcell's "In Concert" to Andee Rudloff's "Hillsboro Village" to the multiple Tomato Arts Fest murals. And the community has been more than happy to grab a paintbrush and join in on the creative projects.

Sunday, another large-scale mural will have its official dedication — but this project isn't one you'll drive by on the street.

A 75-foot-long, 40-foot-high mural of a sprawling oak tree is now perched on top of a roof in downtown Nashville.

The "Tree of Life" mural, designed by local artist Beth English, has taken a full month to reach completion, with many gallons of paint and the help of nearly 100 community members,



Artist Beth English paints on her "Tree of Life" mural. SUBMITTED

including Mayor Karl Dean.

The "Tree of Life" is now the centerpiece of the rooftop garden above McKendree United Methodist Church, 520 Commerce St.

"The first time I visited the space, I knew what I wanted to paint," English said. "It was that simple. I had a vision for the project and never wavered from the original idea. A Southern live oak tree was destined to grow in the middle

of downtown.

"It's so sunny and hot on the rooftop. I wanted a tree that would cool off the entire space, and I wanted the light to shine from behind the leaves."

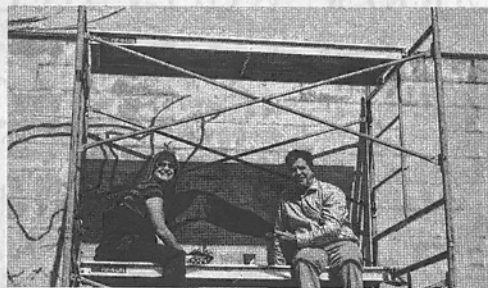
English says that you can see the tree from the ground when walking down Fifth and Commerce. But it's the views from the rooftop that are most breathtaking.

"You can see the Ryman, the AT&T 'Batman' building, the Pinnacle building."

Passion topics

The mural painting was a kickoff event for Artober, the Metro Arts Commission's monthlong celebration of arts and humanities in Nashville. Church member Heather Stewart purchased all of the materials as her contribution to the church and community.

A highlight of the painting process for English was when the mayor climbed the scaffolding to sit next to her and help paint.



Artist Beth English gets some help from Mayor Karl Dean. KELLY WALBERG, NOWPLAYINGNASHVILLE.COM

IF YOU GO

What: "Tree of Life" mural unveiling and reception.

When: After the 10 a.m. homecoming service on Sunday.

Where: United Methodist Church, 520 Commerce St.

Cost: Free and open to public. Parking is free in the McKendree garage, off Sixth Avenue, between Church and Commerce streets.

Information: www.binglishart.com or www.mckendreetoday.com

"Mayor Karl Dean said that he loved the space, the views of the city, and that we were working on a project that touched on (things) the Mayor's Office is passionate about: art, community, urban gardening and a healthy lifestyle," English said.

Sunday's dedication coincides with the church's

225th homecoming service, which will begin at 10 a.m. The mural dedication and reception will follow on the roof.

After the worship service, a GenerARTsity Showcase in the church's lower lobby will feature a large exhibit of artwork created by McKendree members.