

## Additional Supporting Articles on the Moapa Valley Mural & the Artist Finalists



# Artists Present Ideas For Overton Community Center Mural

[mvprogress.com/2017/03/22/artists-present-ideas-for-overton-community-center-mural](http://mvprogress.com/2017/03/22/artists-present-ideas-for-overton-community-center-mural)

By **VERNON ROBISON**

*Moapa Valley Progress*

Moapa Valley residents were met with an embarrassment of artistic riches in three presentations made by competing artists at the Moapa Valley Town Advisory Board (MVTAB) meeting held Wednesday, March 15. Each artist was vying for the opportunity to bring his/her unique conception to full realization on the west wall of the Overton Community Center.

The three contestants comprised the top finalists in a county wide art competition, explained Clark County cultural program supervisor Patrick Gaffey. The county released a Request for Qualifications for the project back in September. "We had a large number of applicants for the project," Gaffey told the audience at Wednesday's meeting. "Our jury selected three finalists who were sent to come up with some detailed proposals."

The three finalists included local artists Joan Day and Heidi Leavitt, as well as Las Vegas artist Gig Depio. Each had been paid \$1,000 to create a full design proposal, including a miniature model of the mural, which would be presented to the jury and the community for consideration. At the meeting each artist had 20 minutes to present his/her conception. After that the audience was given five minutes to ask questions.

Gaffey explained that the winner would receive a total budget of \$27,000 to complete the project, which comprised of a mural 12 ft high and 36 ft wide to cover the entire west wall of the meeting room. The goal for the project was to select an original art piece that would capture the unique cultural aspects of the Moapa Valley community, Gaffey explained.

The first to present was Joan Day. Her presentation depicted a vast landscape taking in all of the Moapa Valley from Warm Springs to Valley of Fire. "I was impressed by this narrow strip of green along the river vs. the vast expanse of desert all around it," Day said. "It shows just how difficult this environment must have been for the first settlers here."

Day said that she had surveyed many local people as they frequented downtown businesses, to learn what they would most like to see in the mural. The elements that people most often mentioned included Valley of Fire; area wildlife; the valley's unique history, including puebloan, Paiute, farming and ranching traditions; and outdoor recreation. Day said that her plan was to apply paint directly to the surface of the wall so it would be a permanent fixture of the building.

Gig Depio was next to present his work. He talked about his ongoing work as an advocate for public art. He showed examples of a number of large murals that he had created for various public places and exhibits. Depio explained that he would be painting on large panels in an oil medium. That way the mural would last longer and could be relocated if ever the community center should change locations.

Depio's proposal was a vast collage of beautifully depicted historical detail. "Early on in my research, someone told me about the book of Beezy," Depio said, referring to volume 1 of the local history book entitled Muddy Valley Reflections by Beezy Tobiasson. "I got a copy of it and I read it three times until I started to form a cultural narrative in my head." Depio said that he drew from images and stories from the book for his painting. The work included images of early Mormon pioneers crossing the perilous Virgin River waters to arrive in the Muddy. It also paid tribute to both early Puebloan and Paiute history. The mural depicted the construction of the Lost City Museum. It also depicted many iconic and historic buildings including the St. Thomas School, Gentry Hotel, the Arrowhead Store and others.

The final presentation was given by Heidi Leavitt. Leavitt pointed out that she was born and raised in the community and that she had been studying and creating art for most of her life. She said that she was inspired by the motto currently appearing on the community center wall which professes to value a rural lifestyle. Her proposal was her interpretation of what a rural quality of life truly means, she said.

Leavitt said that she had begun by sketching some of the old buildings that had made up early Moapa Valley. But she soon realized that, while they had a certain beauty, there was something missing. "It just looked kind of empty, like there was no soul in it," Leavitt said. "Then I started to realize that the heart and soul of this community is the people." She began pouring through local histories looking for the stories of people. She found many interesting stories about individuals and families whose experiences exemplified important community values like Determination, Service, Work Ethic, Perseverance and more. Including depictions of these stories in her mural began to give the work the soul that she had been missing, Leavitt said.

Leavitt said that she also planned to paint on panels that could be removed. The painting would also be waterproof because she had observed some moisture and dampness in the old building while preparing her proposal. Her installation also included a rustic wood trim, and an incorporation of the existing architectural features of the wall, such as doors and other features, into the mural's design.

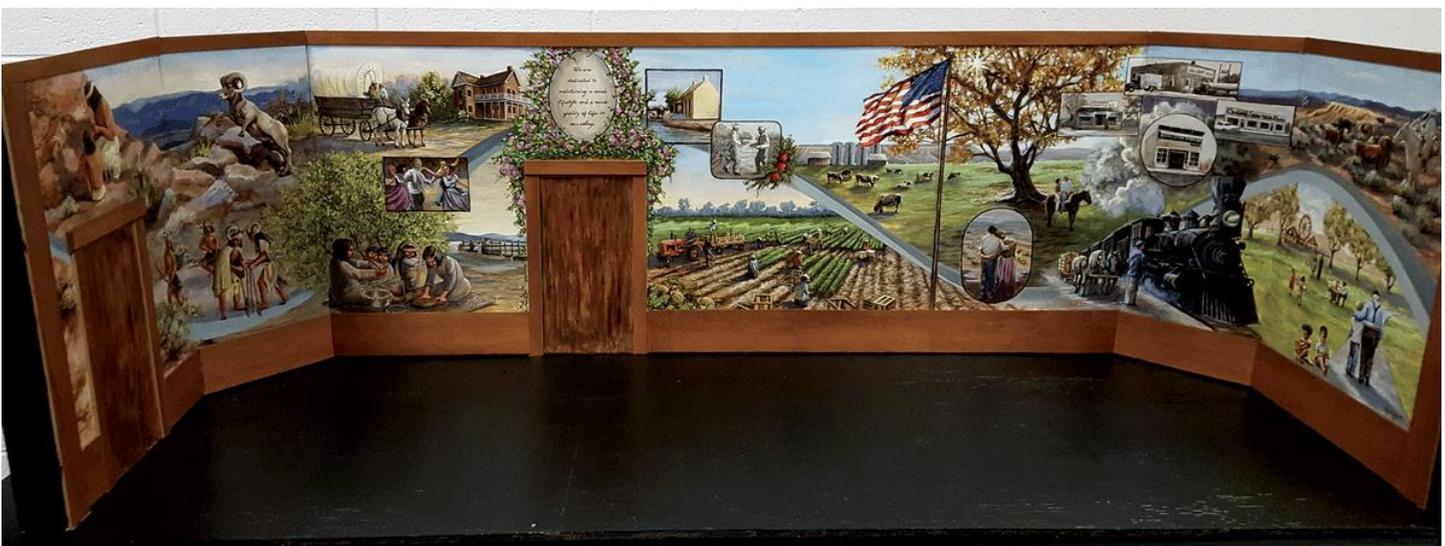
After all presentations were complete, the audience left the hall and the jury remained behind to deliberate on who the finalist would be.

Gaffey explained that the finalist would not be announced that night, but instead would be recognized at a later time. The winning artist will have roughly to the end of the year to complete his/her work, in the community center.

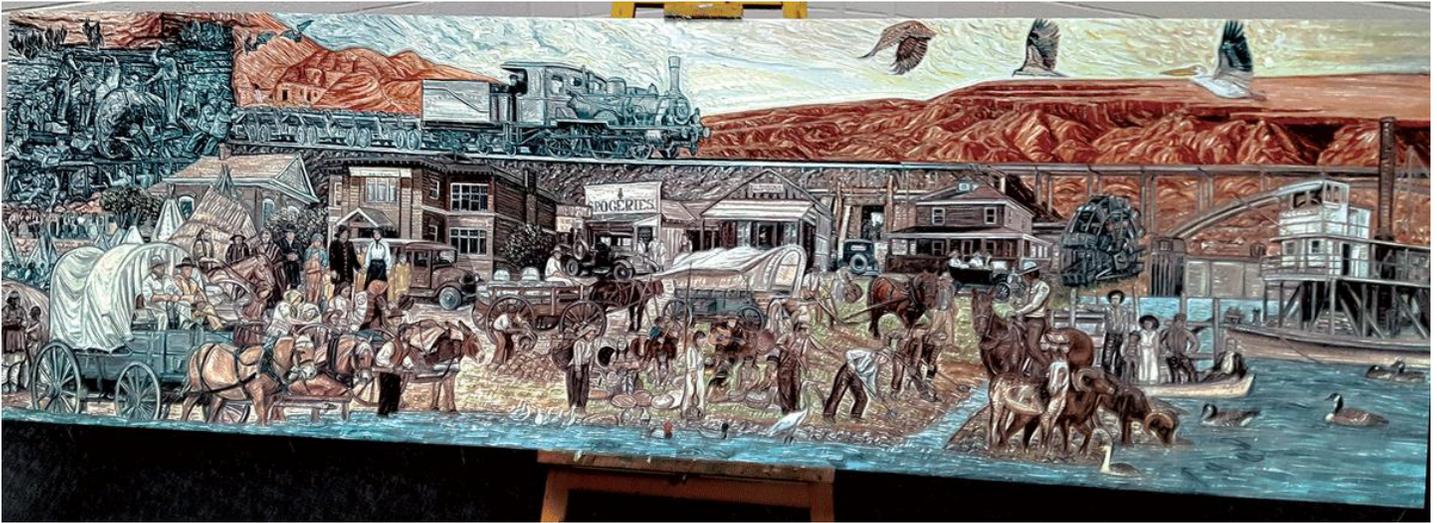
*(Photos of all three artist conceptions may be viewed on the Progress website at [www.mvprogress.com](http://www.mvprogress.com))*



Mural proposed by local artist Joan Day



Mural proposed by local artist Heidi Leavitt.



Mural proposed by artist Gig Depio of Las Vegas.

<http://mvprogress.com/2017/03/22/artists-present-ideas-for-overton-community-center-mural/>

## PAINT THIS DESERT

### A MASTERFUL RURAL MURAL BY GIG DEPIO / 12-12-2018

<https://www.paintthisdesert.com/field-notes/a-masterful-rural-mural-by-gig-depio?fbclid=IwAR0HEIL9Fr9kmAYVhcH8jYJ-PBoUSg6b4PI7Ksk5v9Mj1HdJ3m5nzRof9ul>

## Choosing Finalist Difficult For Independent Panel

[mvprogress.com/2017/05/17/choosing-finalist-difficult-for-independent-panel](http://mvprogress.com/2017/05/17/choosing-finalist-difficult-for-independent-panel)

By **MAGGIE MCMURRAY**

*Moapa Valley Progress*

A miniature prototype of the mural that was selected as the winner of the Overton Community Center contest. This piece depicting Moapa Valley history, and created by Las Vegas artist Gig Depio, will be installed in coming months at the Community Center.

A final winner has been chosen in the mural contest for the Overton Community Center. Las Vegas artist Gig Depio's mural was chosen to be displayed on the west wall of the building's main meeting room.



The final decision was delayed due to the high quality of the final submissions and the difficulty the panel had in choosing a winner. Ultimately, the office of County Commissioner Marilyn Kirkpatrick decided to use all three submissions, in some way, in the downtown Overton area – although Depio's mural will be the one installed at the community center.

Details on how and where to use the runner-up mural ideas of artists Joan Day and Heidi Leavitt, both from Moapa Valley, are still under discussion and in the planning stages. But the Commissioner's office is intending to purchase

smaller versions of the murals from the artists and display them at prominent spots in the community where they can be observed and appreciated while reflecting the rich history of Moapa Valley.

The contest was originally launched last fall and many artists applied for the job, which promised to pay a stipend of \$27,000 to the finalist to cover the cost labor and materials. Day, Leavitt, and Depio were chosen as finalists and each awarded \$1,000 to create a full design proposal. These proposals were then presented at a MVTAB meeting in March before a panel of judges, selected by the Commissioner's office. The panel included both local people and art professionals from Las Vegas.

"Each of the mural proposals were incredibly stunning in their own way," said Community Liaison for Commissioner Kirkpatrick, Janice Ridondo. "Although they were each completely different, they were each completely beautiful and reflected the life and history of Moapa Valley. You could see how involved each artist got with the community."

Ultimately, the panel chose Depio as the winner and he was notified by letter very recently. Depio's vision includes a panoramic view of the history of Moapa Valley done with extreme attention to detail. He plans to create his mural on moveable panels that will be installed over the west wall of the community center in a semi-permanent fashion. The installation can be disassembled and moved, however, should the need ever arise.

"I plan to start painting as soon as the funds for my materials are released by the county," Depio said. "The first three months at least I will be painting in my studio in Vegas. But eventually I will be spending at least a month in Moapa Valley retouching, installing, and sealing the panels in place."

Depio said he feels very close ties to Moapa Valley even though he was raised in the Philippines. He began the research for his proposal by visiting Lost City Museum. While there, he heard about a book on the history of the area written by Beezy Tobiasson.

"I got that book and I read it three times," he said. "It fascinated me. I could see it in my head like it was a movie playing out and I knew I needed to paint that movie in one whole shot for the mural."

Depio said that one of the places he lived in the Philippines reminded him exactly of how the early pioneers lived here. "We traveled by horse and wagon over rough roads to a little town on a little river with no electricity," he said. "I really related to how the first Mormons must have worked and suffered."

In addition to reading Tobiasson's book on area history, Depio also did some "hands on" research, meeting and talking with people throughout the valley, at Lost City Museum, and even while hanging out at McDonalds.

"I was very excited to learn that Moapa Valley had its own art guild," Depio said. "I saw some of their work in the museum and was so impressed. I am a member of many similar organizations in Vegas and I think the talent I saw here surpasses what I have seen in Vegas. I am anxious to attend their meetings and get to meet them."

Depio has a rich history in art. His father was an artist and Depio served as his assistant for 20 years. Although Depio loved art, he had doubts about being able to make a living as an artist, so he got a business degree.

"I didn't want to always have no money like my dad," he explained. "But then I realized that a love of art sticks with you."

With permission from his wife, Depio decided to take a 3-year break and work as a full-time artist beginning in 2013. After a slow start full of many rejection letters, Depio began to see enough success that he is still able to do art full-time, which he loves.

In addition to his art, Depio volunteers with many organizations, including the Las Vegas Artists Guild and several Clark County public art programs. That is where he learned of the Moapa Valley project. Depio and his wife have one son, who is 16 who also loves art.

Depio invites anyone who is interested to stop by his Vegas studio and see his painting process and the mural as it progresses. The mural is due to be finished and installed before the end of the year.

*(End)*

# CATCHING UP WITH COUNTY

By Ed Fuentes, *Paint this Desert*

8/8/2017



## FIELD NOTES:

As we wait for white smoke to appear from the conclave of Clark County that announces new public art

leadership, or at least a memo, PtD has the chance to catch up blog readers on some of the County's summer public art notes shared on Facebook and newsletters. Onward.

*Photo of Artist: Ed Fuentes*

## BIG MUDDY:

At his home studio, Gig **Depio** showed the penciled draft of "Through the Muddy," his commission for the Moapa Valley Mural Project, a Clark County Public Art commission that took over his garage. "The final piece will be about 39-feet wide and 12-feet tall," said Depio. In all, 16 panels will be installed on the west wall of the main meeting room in the Moapa Valley Community Center. It will serve as a backdrop to Town Advisory Board meetings, as well other public events held in the room. It may very well make the public space a destination. Below Gig shows the ongoing progress.

<https://www.paintthisdesert.com/field-notes/catching-up-with-county>



*Photo of Artist: Ed Fuentes*



*Close-up Photos: Gig Depio*

