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'Home' at the Station

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'Home,' the newest Installation at the Station, captures local history and culture in colorful mural

BY REGINA ELLING

A colorful mural combining history, culture and artistic expression is not only bringing viewers something to contemplate — it has brought the artist unexpected pleasure as well.

The 2,535-square-foot mural painted by San Diego-based Mexican American artist Scarlett Baily is titled "Home," and it's the newest piece in "Installations at the Station," the series of outdoor public artworks at Liberty Station in Point Loma. It's on the archways between Barracks 14 and 15 of the former Naval Training Center.

The mural features aspects of land and sea through coastal flora and fauna, vintage naval knots, tule boats, lush marshes and even an underwater scene, "combining different characteristics of the San Diego region with Liberty Station's maritime roots," said Lisa Johnson, president and chief executive of the NTC Foundation, the nonprofit responsible for overseeing development of the Arts District at Liberty Station.

"It's spectacular. It just sings when you see it," Johnson said.

Initially, Baily was a bit nervous to be painting at such a popular venue. But the experience "turned into one of the most pleasant live situations I've had in my career as a muralist," she said.

Baily said visitors have been very careful around the painting site and when they stop, they are eager to discuss the work and ask questions.

"It's such a rewarding experience to be working here, and it's an incredible opportunity to have these exchanges with everyone, from local artists to the public to even young kids watching with awe," she said.

Baily began the painting Sept. 18 and expects to be finished by the end of October. Three community painting days were originally planned for the public to not only watch the artist but to help her as well. However, the first one on Sept. 30 drew such a large turnout that there wasn't much left for volunteers to paint.

So the next two community painting days, scheduled for Oct. 13-14, were instead offered as opportunities to meet Baily and watch her work. Coloring sheets of the mural and art supplies were on hand for those who wanted to try their own versions of the project.

The idea for the mural started when Baily began exploring the concept of "home," she said.

"When I am researching, there is always

something that sparks my curiosity. It all starts with a personal question and expands to really reaching out in the community."

She said she started thinking about what makes people feel connected in San Diego. From the beginning, she was inspired by the local colors — from the flowers to the sunsets.

"I wanted the colors to look like nature itself," Baily said. "I wanted very saturated and very vibrant. ... I wanted to capture those breathtaking tones all around us."

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Baily worked primarily in black and white. "But now it's time for some color and joy in the work," she said.

Even in its unfinished state, guests have been getting the mural's local connection, she said. "One of the comments I get is that these are such San Diego colors."

Several animals also feature prominently in the artwork.

"We're so lucky to live with such biodiversity here," Baily said. "I wanted these animals, that are the stars of the mural, to be



VINCENT ANDRUNAS

Artist Scarlett Baily (center) gets help from Alexia Rodriguez, Uriel and Shaylyn Osuna and Amanda Munoz in painting her new mural, "Home," at Liberty Station in Point Loma.

our teachers in some ways."

An underwater scene featuring gray whales was inspired by their migration, which Baily likened to an ancestral journey.

"It's bravery, it's motherhood — it's just so impactful," she said.

Baily said she chose egrets "to bring awareness to the wetlands and the need to preserve them" and an osprey "because they're very powerful and every time I see one it takes my breath away."

The seagulls in the mural have been somewhat controversial, she said.

"People either love them or hate them, but they are such a reminder for us to have fun and play and rejoice in all the recreation we have available here," Baily said.

As part of her research for the mural's maritime themes, Baily met Stanley Rodriguez, a Kumeyaay professor and military veteran who completed boot camp

"It's like a warm embrace here. I wasn't expecting to be impacted in this very sentimental way as an artist. My hope is that Liberty Station becomes a meeting place and second home for people, like it has for me during the course of this project."

— Scarlett Baily

NTC in the 1980s.

"Dr. Rodriguez preserves Kumeyaay maritime traditions, teaching communities how to construct *ha kwaiyo*, or tule boats," Baily said. "I am so excited to share this more than 10,000-year tradition, that continues to thrive, with the visitors of Liberty Station."

Working on the mural enabled her to get back in touch with her own Indigenous roots, Baily said.

"There's so much curiosity about native culture now, and I hope this mural brings a lot more awareness of the traditions and how

SEE MURAL, A5

at



PHOTOS BY VINCENT ANDRUNAS

Jennifer Lopez, Lily Montelvo and Fiamma and Christina Padilla lend their brushstrokes to Liberty Station's new mural, "Home."



Andrea Hunter and Diana Davidson pitch in on "Home," the newest artwork in "Installations at the Station" at Liberty Station.



Addison Asuncion, Kai Hammen and Melissa and Ava Roman turn out for Liberty Station's community painting day for the new mural "Home."

FROM MURAL, A4

they started," she said.

The final selection of "Home" for Installations at the Station was determined by the NTC Foundation's Art in Public Places Committee, and Johnson said she couldn't be more pleased with the choice.

"I'm super excited about it," said Johnson, who added that she has been showing off the work to guests and friends. "Scarlett is a delightful person, her work is awesome and beautiful and it completely enlivens the space.

"Scarlett's vision to connect the community to San Diego's rich history goes

farther than painting a picture of the skyline — it's visual storytelling."

Baily said her work on the mural has been "refreshing and motivating."

"It's like a warm embrace here. I wasn't expecting to be impacted in this very sentimental way as an artist," she said. "My hope is that Liberty Station becomes a meeting place and second home for people, like it has for me during the course of this project."

To see more of Baily's work, visit scarlettbaily.com. To see all of the current Installations at the Station, visit libtystation.com/explore/installations-at-the-station.

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