



ARTS

Transforming spaces, empowering voices

Maura Trice, the artist behind some of Fayetteville's most loved murals, shares her journey to becoming a celebrated local muralist

BY SHARON MOYER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY AND COURTESY OF MAURA TRICE

When Maura Trice moved from Italy to the United States in 2017, she had never painted anything larger than a canvas. Today, her vibrant mural "50 Years of Color," graces the Arts Council of Fayetteville/Cumberland County building, celebrating artistic heritage while challenging viewers to explore art history through her unique lens.

"If you wait to be perfect to do anything, you'll never do it," Trice reflects on her journey from newcomer to celebrated muralist.

This philosophy has guided her artistic evolution, from her first large-scale public work in 2022 to her latest achievement: a striking celebration of art history unveiled during the 2024 International Folk Festival for the Arts Council's 50th anniversary.

Growing up in Italy, Trice was immersed in art from her childhood through her father's photographs, grandfather's paintings and drawing sessions with her mother. This immersion created Trice's creative foundation, but finding her authentic voice came after immigration.

"I learned how to speak up for myself, how to believe in myself more," she reflects. This newfound confidence has become a central theme in her work, particularly in projects focusing on women's experiences and self-image.

Her breakthrough 2022 exhibition, "More Than a Body," combined photography and digital art with raw personal narratives from 10 local women. Each portrait was displayed alongside the subject's own words, creating what Trice describes as "a cathartic experience." Participants were encouraged to choose outfits and makeup that truly represented them, while Trice used her photography and digital art to channel their narratives through symbolism.

"When we look at a picture, we are looking at a real

person with dreams, expectations, failures and successes," Trice explains. "I want observers to feel observed so they can put themselves in these women's shoes."

The exhibition became a catalyst for transformation, with participants sharing previously untold stories.

"Sometimes we set the bar so high on what we expect from ourselves," she observes. "We want to have a career, kids, their activities, and there are never enough hours in a day. On top of that, maybe we should be in shape and look a certain way."

By day, Trice manages a manufacturing team of nine, applying those organizational skills to her artistic endeavors during evenings and weekends. Her journey from canvas to large-scale murals began in September of 2022, with "Two Tales of One City" celebrating Fayetteville and North Carolina heritage. Using a projector to maintain proportions across separate boards, she created her first outdoor mural, which withstood two years of weather and hurricanes, strengthening her confidence for more ambitious projects.

"50 Years of Color" represents a bold vision of artistic heritage, featuring reimagined works from well-known and lesser-known artists.

"Coming from Europe, I decided to put a little bit of my history and choose artists that might have been less known here," she explains.

The mural features reimagined versions of works by Frida Kahlo and the iconic American Gothic, alongside European arts masters like Tamara de Lempicka. The piece includes an innovative element: a QR code linking to her website featuring videos about each panel of the mural, reflecting her commitment to accessibility and learning.



Photographer, digital illustrator and painter Maura Trice.



Trice's vibrant mural "50 Years of Color" graces the Arts Council of Fayetteville/Cumberland County building.

"I wanted people to be able to enjoy and know the stories behind each painting," Trice says. "My idea was to not only do something visually pleasing but also to get people more involved in art history."

Lauren Falls, marketing and events director at Cool Spring Downtown District, praises the technical execution and community impact.

"Public art gives our downtown area a sense of authenticity," Falls says. "Each mural tells its own story. They are like fingerprints, each has its own identity."

Sarah Busman, director of community engagement at the Arts Council, notes how the mural invites multiple levels of engagement.

"You can experience its beauty and joy, or dig deeper," Busman says. "People come in saying, 'I swear I've seen that third piece before,' and it becomes like a puzzle."

For Trice, seeing her completed murals installed is exciting, particularly because she never sees them assembled until installation day.

"I absolutely loved the day of the installation when we did the reveal," she shares. "I was explaining the stories of the people represented, and people were asking questions. Getting them interested was mind-blowing. I understand not everybody would be interested in art history, but being able to pass on my enthusiasm and love for it was amazing."

The mural's impact extends beyond aesthetics. Having

grown up in Italy where art is "taken for granted" among ancient statues and cathedrals, Trice finds Fayetteville's appreciation refreshing. She notes how public art fosters civic pride, preventing vandalism not through surveillance but through community ownership.

"They take such pride in their city displaying art that it prevents this kind of behavior," she observes. "The deterrent isn't cameras or police officers, it's this exposure to art and having events that create this sense of pride."

Looking ahead, Trice continues pushing boundaries with her next project: photographs of local models wearing dresses she's crafting from recycled materials, beginning with paper and cardboard. It's another example of her willingness to step outside her comfort zone. She anticipates debuting this exhibition toward the end of 2025.

"I realized that lack of confidence was my worst enemy," she shares. "When I became more confident, I started achieving more."

Through intimate portraits and public murals, Trice creates spaces where women can see themselves reflected and celebrated.

As she reminds us, quoting Coco Chanel, "Beauty begins the moment you decide to be yourself."

In Fayetteville's artistic landscape, her work stands as a testament to the power of female voices and visions, inviting viewers not just to look but to see themselves and others more deeply. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sharon Moyer, a native of Muskegon, Michigan, moved to Fayetteville in 1987 and has lived here since. Sharon works as the community engagement administrator at the Partnership for Children of Cumberland County.



Trice's next project — which will debut toward the end of 2025 — will be photographs of local models wearing dresses she's crafting from recycled materials, beginning with paper and cardboard.