

ELMHURST

Elmhurst University celebrates first mural in Elmhurst

By Graydon Megan
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Elmhurst's newest public art is the mural "Be Bold Be Elmhurst" on the wall of Elmhurst University's R. A. Faganel Hall, facing north on Park Avenue west of Prospect Avenue. People from the community and the school attended the Tuesday celebration of a mural in Elmhurst. (Graydon Megan / Pioneer Press)

Elmhurst University officials were joined by city officials Tuesday (May 17) in a ceremony marking completion of the city's first mural, painted on the north-facing wall of the school's R.A. Faganel Hall on Park Avenue west of Prospect Avenue.

The large mural is the work of Elmhurst University art department faculty members Rafael Blanco, a professional muralist, and Andrew Sobol, chair of the department.



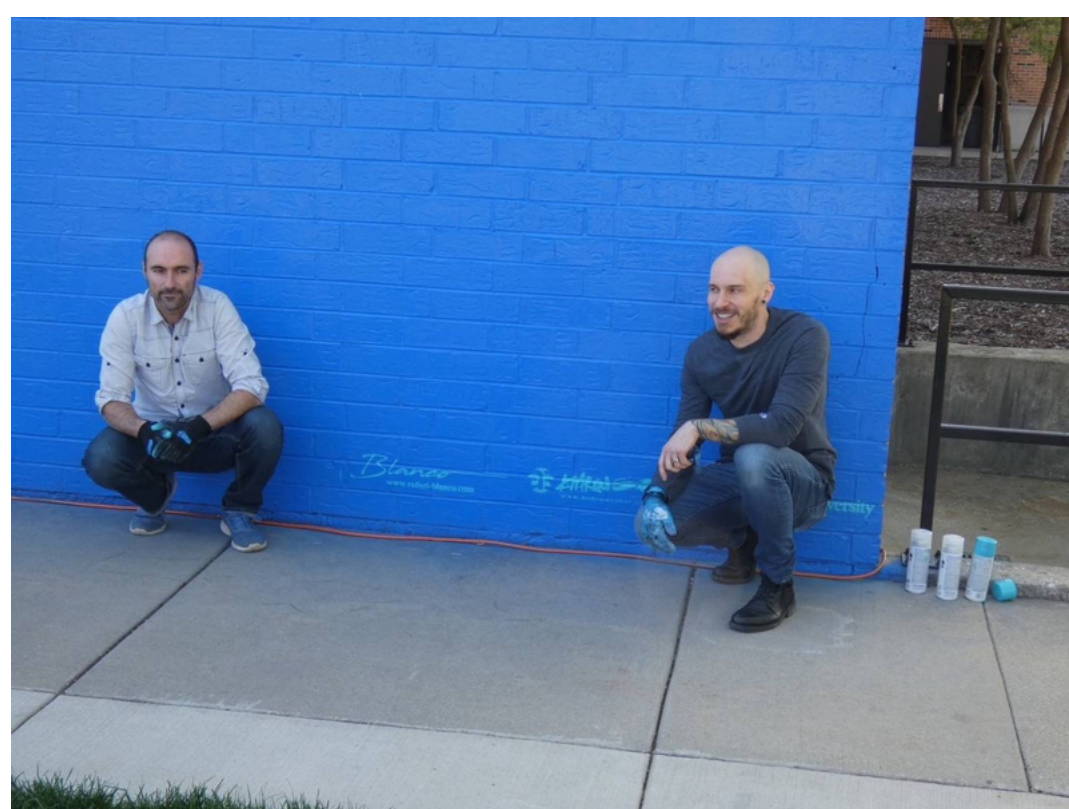
Elmhurst's newest public art is the mural "Be Bold Be Elmhurst" on the wall of Elmhurst University's R. A. Faganel Hall, facing north on Park Avenue west of Prospect Avenue. (Graydon Megan / Pioneer Press)

The 200-foot long mural follows the theme "Be Bold, Be Elmhurst," incorporating those words against a blue background flanking a many-hued central face looking out toward the city.

"It's for the residents of Elmhurst as well as for the campus," Blanco said in a phone conversation with Pioneer Press. "It's a portrait of a face where a large crowd of people could see themselves represented in it."

University officials said the mural was painted "over two windy, rainy weeks in April," but getting the art on the wall took much longer than that.

"The idea for the mural came up quite a while ago," Sobol said in a conversation with Pioneer Press. "As the University was approaching its 150th anniversary (this year), we were asked to brainstorm — all the faculty — all the ways we could celebrate that. The art department threw in the idea of a mural and we didn't know where that would go."



Artists Rafael Blanco and Andrew Sobol signed their names Tuesday to officially complete the mural. (Graydon Megan / Pioneer Press)

Blanco picked up the story from there, explaining that from the idea to the actual artwork was a long process with the city of Elmhurst.

"The city didn't allow murals before," Blanco said, "so we had to change the ordinance and that took a year and a half of meetings ..."

The mural faces outward, so while it is on a University building, it is also the first public art mural in the City of Elmhurst. The artists hope the mural will connect the campus and the Elmhurst community in a way that will inspire its viewers and enhance the city's visual landscape.

Elmhurst Mayor Scott Levin spoke Tuesday of the importance of public art in Elmhurst. "We have this beautiful mural now. This is something that enriches our community, makes it a better place to live."



Elmhurst University President Troy VanAken (l) with artists Rafael Blanco (center) and Art Department head Andrew Sobol. (Graydon Megan / Pioneer Press)

Levin acknowledged the role the school community played in the project. "I'm particularly pleased to note that the students and faculty weighed in and considered this. It's a really beautiful piece."

"It's been a long road but it has been beautiful too," Rafael said during Tuesday's celebration. "We wanted to do something that was meaningful to the school and to the community."

Graydon Megan is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.



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