



Mario "ZORE" Gonzalez and slightly more secretive Zor Zor Zor put their artistic talents to work on 1st and Main. Photos by John Moran.



# VOICES WILL STILL BE HEARD They're taking it to the streets... in a BIG way

by John Moran

“ Let's put a  
new coat  
of **PAINT**  
on this  
lonesome  
old town. ”  
– Tom Waits “New Coat of Paint”





Corban “COLD” Lundborg created these two large scale paintings on buildings owned by Scott Cornwell and Susan Price (pictured right). Photos by John Moran and Scott Cornwell.



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This year marked the first time in 11 years that the Voices from the Warehouse District did not produce a cutting edge, month-long, autumn, art extravaganza. Some are under the impression that Voices has been silenced, never to be heard from again, and many people lament its possible demise. But... if you keep your ears and eyes open, listen carefully and look around, you just might overhear and experience some familiar Voices, though they may be emanating from different locations.

“Voices is moving from a place that has a geographical anchorage, the Millwork District, to do more art outside of that address,” said Sam Mulgrew, co-founder of Voices and a member of Voices Productions. “Our initiatives right now are focused on two- and three-dimensional art, installations, and producing events that are somehow engaging to people. We are taking it to the streets.”

And taking it to the streets in a big way... and I do mean BIG. Inspired by the Voices XI: Streets’ theme, several street and graffiti artists who took part in Voices 2015 were asked to return to Dubuque and put their talents to work creating huge murals on several downtown Dubuque buildings.

“The concept originated,” said Sam, “when many of the mural and street artists that came to Dubuque to do work at Voices XI all expounded on a shared reframe: that Dubuque was a really cool town... what is the deal with no public art? And most said bring us back, let’s do some projects together.”

In late September 2016, the Voices team, made up of Gene and Jane Tully, Sam and Wendy Mulgrew, and Janice Roerig-Blong, approached Scott Cornwell and Susan Price, the owners of two adjacent buildings at 653 White St. and 62 E. 7th St. The latter building is home to Smokestack, Dubuque’s historic urban-industrial arts and culture venue, bar and restaurant. Scott and Susan were delighted to help Voices bring murals like those they grew up with in NYC to the streets of downtown Dubuque.

Corban “COLD” Lundborg, (cold-studio.com) – fine artist, photographer, US Air Force Reserve photojournalist and staff sergeant – was commissioned to paint a wall on each building. Born and raised in the Twin Cities, Lundborg’s 2015 artist statement from Voices XI: Streets reads: “Each piece I create is an adventure. Like setting off on a new voyage, the unknown lies ahead. My paintings reflect my lifestyle: revolutionary, intrepid, and close to the street. I embody the diverse cultures I witness in my travels and portray ethnicity through my brushstrokes. I draw inspiration from the heartbeat of the city; I watch the walls and study the streets. My paintings take a lot from me: time, money, sleep, and energy. In return, I have received something priceless: a voice.”

Lundborg was given artistic discretion and the untitled Smokestack mural was completed first. Some perceive a Native American motif in this mural, yet Lundborg was initially unaware that Smokestack was once the site of an enormous Native American burial mound, important both to Native Peoples and to the region’s earliest white settlers. Cornwell and Price told him of its history after the mural was 90% completed; the arrowhead was added last and is a conscious nod to the site’s history.

“The Smokestack mural was ultimately designed around space given,” said Lundborg. “I took a picture of the wall, plotted the obstacles and worked with the part of the wall that would best hold the paint. The imagery was inspired by the history of the building, the location, and my personal style.”

For the untitled 653 White St. mural, Lundborg again was given artistic discretion, yet he included “wildstyle” lettering at Scott Cornwell’s request. “Wildstyle” is the highest, most difficult form of graffiti for artists to master. The lettering reads “COLD,” Corban Lundborg’s tag.

For both of these large-scale murals, which Lundborg began on Friday, September 23 and completed on Thursday, September 29, he used spray paint and acrylic, the latter sometimes applied with a “percussive” roller technique, such as seen in the feathers of the owl in the image.

“Lundborg’s creation of these murals was responsive to each building on this one property, yet also responsive to the property and its surroundings,” said Susan. “The only parameters given to Lundborg for these two murals were to do whatever he desired without literal interpretation of activity within the buildings, thus allowing the murals to achieve a timeless quality and beauty that is completely open to individual interpretation.”

Take a short trip to 653 White St. to see these beautifully done murals, stop in and support the Smokestack, and thank them for their contribution to the new Voices initiative.

The building located on the corner of 1st and Main, owned by Tony Kemp and Bill Barrick and now home to the restaurant, 1st & Main, owned by John and Sara Oglesby, was the third





Graffiti artist Arcy working on the mural at 1st and Locust. Photos by John Moran.



Right now  
we are just  
putting our  
**TOE**  
in the  
**WATER...**

– Sam Mulgrew

building Voices Productions partnered with to create public art. The half block long, three-story building’s southern exterior wall now contains the massive painting created by Mario “ZORE” Gonzalez Jr. and his artistic partner Zor Zor Zor.

The artists, hailing from Chicago, have worked together for the last three years.

“I definitely decided at an early age that I wanted to be a graffiti master, a style master... it’s all about the strokes,” said ZORE. “It’s all about the mark making, the lettering and turning letters into art... or praising letters. People often are confused as to whether graffiti is art, but actually art is graffiti. Without graffiti we wouldn’t have writing. Graffiti is the foundation of all mark making. And I feel we should praise that.

“This wall is based around a painting we did together,” ZORE continued. “We had a basic idea of what we wanted to do and we knew we wanted the sun to be centered, so once we had a sketch and outline of the circle, we worked around that. We did this backwards from the way we usually work. Usually I would paint the color, the foundation, and then come with the strokes, the graffiti, and drips.”

“ZORE does all the letter work, the calligraphy looking styles (the graffiti), and I do the faces, imagery, characters, the figurative work,” said Zor Zor Zor.

“Yeah, I do letter characters and she does people characters,” said ZORE.

The painting has been christened Rising Sun. It is easy to see why with that huge sun image centered in the painting.

“If there is a hidden meaning to this mural we don’t know yet what it is... it is still hiding,” said ZORE. “The sun came about as an afterthought... It looked like a rising sun so we thought we should call it that.”

“And the whole time I was painting the sun,” said Zor Zor Zor, “I had this song stuck in my head – ‘The House of the Rising Sun.’”

The artists also praised the people of Dubuque. “I’m really amazed about Dubuque. It is the most open minded small town I’ve ever been to in my life,” said ZORE. “The people we have dealt with here are more open-minded than Chicago people as far as giving us free reign... In Chicago it’s like, ‘What the hell are you guys doing?’ or ‘That s\*\*\* better come out good!’ In Chicago they’ll speak at you about what they are thinking. But here, I feel like everybody’s lying or they really love our work. I’ve gotten some of the best compliments with people coming up and telling me what they like about it. I’ve never had that. People actually see what I see... that’s rare.”

John and Sara Oglesby feel blessed that the painting is on the building that houses their business. “It seems someone is looking out for us,” said John. “We have a whole new art crowd to cater to now. Voices has been fun to deal with, as well. We plan to build off of the art and keep the ball rolling in any way we can.”

Julien’s Journal also reached out to some of our city art and historic preservation leaders for their opinion. Debra Alleyne, Arts and Cultural Affairs Coordinator for the City of Dubuque had this to say: “I am really excited that there is so much interest in public art, particularly murals, circulating in the city right now. This openness to explore different types of art forms is extraordinarily encouraging. Murals are an unique art form, one that defines the community in which it will reside. Similar to sculpture, they work best in concert with their environment. I love that so many people are willing to lend their walls as canvases to creative genius and I look forward to seeing a variety of murals from a variety of artists.

“Because of the nature of this medium, it is important to ensure that the sites are appropriate and that we strike a balance with our historic preservation efforts and artistic sensibilities, our cutting edge art and community representation, local artists and international talent, professional artists and community engagement projects. We must consider the materials used, how they will weather, and when they should be retouched, replaced or removed.”

According to Sam, the Voices team is actively seeking partners in their latest endeavors. “One of the things we are doing with the mural initiative is forming partnerships with property owners to provide space in the form of a wall or easements on their property,” he said. “We subsidize the artists to get them here and create their work and the logistical support that goes along with that. We are looking to partner with people who have interesting visions for the future of Dubuque. We just want to make Dubuque a more interesting and artistic place to live.”

Sam concluded that, “Right now we are just putting our toe in the water, next spring we are going to jump in the lake.”