



Volunteers help complete the mural. Pictured top to bottom: Bill Allen, William Counter, Shannon Terry, Kristine Meyer, Andrew Jameson, Jameson Holland, Marge Wells, Jennie Hiatt, Phyllis Shields, Ann Foltz

PRODUCTION / PAINTING / VOLUNTEERS

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| BILL ALLEN | DUARNE KALMAN |
| KATIE ALLEN | KRISTINE MEYER |
| ROBIN BLACK | MARGARET MILLER |
| CASEY CALLIS | DUARNE SCHAAB |
| ROSAMARIE FOJDAE | PHYLLIS SHIELDS |
| ANN FOLTZ | SHANNON TERRY |
| ANDREA FUHAMAN | ALEX THURSTON |
| JENNIE HIATT | MARGE WELLS |
| JAMESON HOLLAND | "RUSSELL" |
| ANDREW JAMESON | |

PLANNING

| | |
|---|----------------|
| KATIE ALLEN | GWIN JOHNSON |
| ROBIN BRATT | JUDY LEVERZAPF |
| CHRISTIE CARL | JENINA NORTH |
| BARBARA ENGELHARDT | LINDA SCHEELLE |
| ANDREA FUHAMAN | GARY YUSCHALK |
| ABILENE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE | |

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ARTS COUNCIL OF DICKINSON COUNTY
 PO BOX 604
 207 NW 3RD ST
 ABILENE, KS 67410
 785 263 1884
 WWW.ARTSCOUNCILDK.ORG

DIGITIZED IKE



ARTIST—WILLIAM COUNTER,
 CHAPMAN KANSAS

4TH & BUCKEYE
 ABILENE, KANSAS



The idea for creating a mural for downtown Abilene began in February 2006 as a project to honor the 25th Anniversary of the Arts Council of Dickinson County.

A planning team, with the assistance of Abilene Downtown Revitalization committee, studied many other murals, spoke to many artists, looked at many locations and reviewed many materials. In the end, the team decided that the project should be community based and should emphasize the artistic process as much as the end result.

After interviewing many artists and deliberating many ideas, William Counter from Chapman, KS was chosen to be the lead artist and produce his idea, *Digitized Ike*.

Artist William Counter shared his idea with many community groups and received tremendous support. Abilene resident, Duane Schrag, even wrote a software program specific to this project to reduce the color pattern into 8 shades of gray and ensure precision in painting each pixel of *Digitized Ike*.

The project became a reality thanks to Greg Davis, owner of the wall on which *Digitized Ike* is painted. Mr. Davis generously invested in the repair of the wall allowing for a suitable surface on which to paint.

William worked with intensively behind the scenes by mentoring two high school seniors planning on pursuing post-secondary education in Fine Arts. In a selfless act, William turned over his artist fee to be shared as scholarships for these students who were just getting off to college.

The preliminary work of priming and gridding the wall began at the end of May 2007. On June 11, the scaffolding went up and with the help of community volunteers coming out to paint, the mural was completed in two days.

The Arts Council of Dickinson County hopes that you enjoy the *Digitized Ike* mural for many years to come.



The wall at 4th & Buckeye just after stucco repair was done to close a 3" gap in the substrate.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The Eisenhower Mural idea occurred to me during a recent visit to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. The reason being that the Mayo Clinic prides itself on treating or receiving visitations by essentially every president of the twentieth century. I viewed this historical information in a movie presentation in the lavish visitors center. There was also evident a tinge of state pride when presidents were viewed side by side with the 42nd Vice President Walter Mondale; native of Minnesota. It occurred to me at this point what pride it is for citizens of a state to claim to be the home of a United States President. Abilene is fortunate to be marked with this distinction.

The dilemma in honoring Dwight Eisenhower through art is that it must be appealing to both those living in the town as well as captivating to those who visit. One problem in portrait painting in mural design is that scale is challenging when blowing a face beyond living proportion. The artist is required to make the face appear in the likeness of the person, and on a large scale sometimes the expression gets out of control. The results can render the character more as a cartoon or caricature. There is often the problem of portraits being sentimental. In fact, sentimentality in honoring historical figures is often at the expense of quality or provocative art in general.

My proposal is honoring Eisenhower through a portrait that is conceptualized through a digital process of tiling. The process is a computer rendering of gray tone pixels on a large scale. If executed precisely, what you see in the proposal should translate on a large scale without much error. As the coordinating artist, I would first grid out the region for the painting and assign each square a gray tone value. The paint would be mixed up prior to the actual painting would work out initial color trials and eliminate problems on the larger surface.

The nature of design is specific to Dwight Eisenhower and the time in which he served as President. It was the '50s, and he became one of the first political figures to utilize the new technology of television.

At this time we associate the '50 as black and white television. So his portrait represents the image as an electronic assimilation of information as particles. It also refers to Eisenhower as being at the forefront of the computer age. There is a story of Eisenhower visiting one of the first I.B.M. mainframes and posing the question, "Is there a God?" After several minutes of noisy deliberation, the computer printed out a card, "There is now."

I personally feel that this appeals to both the traditional resident of Abilene and the present generation that may regard Eisenhower as old and dated, and not worthy of honoring. It is often the case that living in a historically designated region one becomes tired of the icon. It is the role of the artist to renew and revitalize those icons in a language that communicates to the present day.

William Counter
12-14-2006



William Counter



If you would like to make a donation to the annual *Digitized Ike* scholarship in honor of William Counter, please send your check to PO Box 604, Abilene, KS 67410 with a notation of purpose in the memo line.

Scholarships will be awarded annually to students graduating from a Dickinson County high school who plan to pursue post-secondary education in the fine arts.