

# Muralist Hubert Massey Celebrates Detroit's Culture Through Art

Massey's works adorn spaces across Detroit. Now, he's jurying an exhibition with Detroit Artists Market to honor the city he loves.  
By **Ashley Winn** - January 17, 2020



*Hubert Massey photograph by Jeff Cancelosi*

**K**resge fellow and multi-medium artist Hubert Massey has been making art in Detroit for nearly 40 years. His interest in art started when he was just six years old, and he is now best known for his 17 vibrant, fresco-style murals, which can be found across the metro area in spots like the Detroit Athletic Club, the Flint Institute of Arts, and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

One of Massey's latest artistic accomplishments is jurying *The All Media Exhibition*, a show that opens to the public on Jan. 17 and runs until Feb. 15 at Detroit Artists Market. Featuring the work of more than 40 local artists and spanning mediums from sculpture to painting, the exhibit is meant to celebrate the colorful and eclectic culture in the city of Detroit. In anticipation of the opening, *Hour Detroit* sat down with Massey to chat about the meaning of the exhibition as well as what draws him to public art and how he hopes his work impacts the community.

**Hour Detroit: The theme for this exhibition is celebration of Detroit's culture and heritage. What does that mean to you?**

**Hubert Massey:** It means celebrating the city of Detroit historically and traditionally. There are a lot of traditional pieces — things depicting our great water fountain on Belle Isle, our automobiles. It's a montage of different pieces from around Detroit and the metro area.

**What factors did you consider when selecting pieces?**

The quality of the artwork, the skill level of artists. But I also tried to touch on many different levels. Some artists who have never even shown Detroit Artists Market got in, because their artwork celebrates what Detroit is all about through their own interpretation.

**Why do you think Detroit Artists Market chose to work with you on this theme?**

I have a real strong passion for the city of Detroit. I've been here for more than 40 years now. I love the revitalization of the city. I love the celebration of this community. To me, we're the creative center of the U.S.

**Are there any common themes that run throughout many of the pieces in this exhibit?**

The different cultures in the city of Detroit, the industrialism, the automobiles, architectural structures.

**What do you hope visitors to the exhibit will get from that experience?**

I hope people get a sense of what Detroit is all about. I hope when they walk away, they say, "Wow, this is the place to be," and they want to come support the city even more.



Hubert Massey mural. // Photograph courtesy of Hubert Massey

### **How has your art evolved over the course of your career?**

My art has become more about celebrating communities and telling their stories — stories you probably wouldn't hear unless you had those conversations. A lot of times, I have community forums where we sit down and talk about the community, and some of their stories become inspiration for my paintings.

### **Why are you so drawn to public art?**

I've been doing public art since I first got [to Detroit] in 1983. I was a sign painter, because billboards were all hand-painted at that time. I did that for about 12 years, until the digital age came in. Then I did my first public artwork at the Atheneum hotel, 27 years ago. These pieces are in permanent places, so they can be there for hundreds of years. I gravitate to pieces that can tell a story, and I want that story to live for many years to come. I think it becomes part of history and culture.

### **What's your favorite piece you've created?**

Probably the fresco mural at the TFC Center, because I had the opportunity to tell the story of the city of Detroit as a center of

technology and innovation. I really take pride in it, not only because of the symmetry and the composition, but also because it shows all the things that Detroit is, and to me, it's a timeless piece. It shows that Detroit still is the center of technology and innovation.

**What affect do you hope your work has on people?**

I hope people get into creating artwork and telling their stories. I want to inspire people to be creative. I think we need more artists being themselves and trying to impact their communities. It makes a big difference.

---

*For more information about The All Media Exhibition, visit [detroitartistsmarket.org](http://detroitartistsmarket.org).*

**Facebook Comments**