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Reaching New Heights with Freedom First's Headquarters Mural

May 31, 2023 (Roanoke, VA) — Freedom First Credit Union commissioned artist James Bullough to paint a new mural on the exterior of their downtown Roanoke headquarters building, located across from Elmwood Park. Bullough is known locally for the striking mural he painted on the West Station building on Salem Avenue next to Big Lick Brewing. On this project, he is collaborating with artist Onur Dinc.

The mural, which faces the 581 Southbound corridor, depicts a woman climbing up a cliff face with the Blue Ridge Mountains and McAfee's Knob in the background. The image is a nod to Roanoke's love of the outdoors and the mountains we call home.

"We seized the opportunity to promote the Virginia Blue Ridge regional brand with this mural," said Freedom First President and CEO Paul Phillips. "This region has such rich culture, arts, and heritage – not to mention the breathtaking mountain views and unique outdoor recreation. It's a destination for people who love the outdoors, and we are proud to be an active partner in promoting that vision for our community."

Freedom First's Elmwood headquarters is located in an Enterprise Zone, an area where Roanoke City is focusing revitalization efforts. Freedom First coordinated with the Roanoke Outside Foundation and Roanoke Arts Commission to develop a concept that would hold meaning for our region while fitting in with the City's numerous other mural projects.

"Freedom First has always been a great community partner, constantly investing in initiatives that build a better community for everyone," said Pete Eshelman, Senior Director of Creative Strategies at the Roanoke Regional Partnership and Director of the Roanoke Outside Foundation. "They support our organization as well as the events we put on – the Blue Ridge Marathon, Go Cross Cyclocross, and the GO Outside Festival. We're excited to see an homage to Roanoke's love of outdoor activity with this mural."

"Folks now get the power of the City's mural projects in helping to re-envision areas ripe for investment and rally community energy," said Douglas Jackson, Arts and Cultural Coordinator for the City of Roanoke. "We're hoping to get even more art onto neighborhood walls and to get more emerging artists involved. We love the opportunity to help our local artists grow."

Watch a time lapse of the mural here <https://youtu.be/W4dZ95q8TxA> or learn more about Freedom First at <https://www.freedomfirst.com>.

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About Freedom First Credit Union: Freedom First Credit Union is the largest member-owned Community Development Financial Institution in Southwest Virginia. Founded in 1956, Freedom First has grown to over 60,000 members, assets of over \$1 billion, and 12 branch locations in the Roanoke and New River Valleys and Greater Lynchburg. People living, working, worshipping, going to school, or contributing to a nonprofit in the Roanoke, New River, and Shenandoah Valleys or Greater Lynchburg are eligible for membership. Freedom First members benefit from competitive rates, secure and convenient technology, and the knowledge that their money is being reinvested in their community. For more information, please visit www.freedomfirst.com.



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About Artist James Bullough: James Bullough is an American born artist living and working in Berlin, Germany. His studio paintings, and huge monumentally scaled site-specific murals combine delicately handled realistic portraiture with harsh graphic distortion and abstraction. Inspired by the gritty urban graffiti he saw as a youth growing up in Washington, DC, Bullough harnessed its energy and edge while teaching himself more traditional realistic oil painting techniques by studying the Old Masters. Combining the momentum of the one and the technical precision of the other, his work is about staging compelling contrasts and juxtapositions. Whether working with spray paint on massive facades or oils in his studio, Bullough's work strikes a delicate balance between realistic portraiture and stylized distortions, straddling the space between traditional and contemporary. View his portfolio at jamesbullough.com.

About Artist Onur Dinc: Swiss-born artist Onur Dinc is best known for his large-scale murals, which he has painted all over the world. Fascinated with photorealism, he employs acrylic paint and brushes to create his works on canvas, paper, and walls. His unique style has garnered him international fame and numerous collaborations with other major street artists, such as Wes21. Other significant projects include the commission for big global companies like Volvo. Onur's figurative work has also appeared in the music videos of German hip-hop artist Kool Savas. The son of Turkish immigrants, Onur has been interested in art since his youth and gained a passion for figurative paintings from his sister. Find his work on Instagram [@OnurPainting](https://www.instagram.com/OnurPainting).

About Roanoke Outside Foundation: Roanoke Outside creates economic growth by leveraging natural assets to attract investment and talent. Through business attraction, signature outdoor events, strategic partnerships, social offerings, and infrastructure investment Roanoke Outside seeks to establish the Roanoke Region as a place where businesses want to locate and where people want to live. Roanoke Outside manages www.roanokeoutside.com and a portfolio of brand-building events that include Blue Ridge Marathon, GO Outside Festival (GO Fest), and Go Cross Cyclocross Race. The Roanoke Outside Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization and is part of the [Roanoke Regional Partnership](#) family, which also includes [Get2KnowNoke](#).

About the Roanoke Arts Commission: The Roanoke Arts Commission (RAC) was established by Ordinance No. 26537 in 1983 to "advise and assist City Council on matters relating to the advancement of the arts and humanities within the city." Each member is elected by Council to a three-year term. Terms can be renewed twice if reappointed by Council. Members are limited to three consecutive terms as set out in Section 2-281.1 of the City Code. Learn more at the [Roanoke City website](#).