



HERITAGE OHIO

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2012 AWARD WINNER

BEST DESIGN PROJECT

THE IWO JIMA MURAL

AMHERST, OHIO

In an attempt to honor the people, places, and projects that exemplify growth through preservation and revitalization, Heritage Ohio granted the 2012 Annual Award of Best Design Project to Mike Sekletar and Ryan Shannon for its project, The Iwo Jima Mural.

RECOGNIZING OPPORTUNITY

A large, gray painted brick wall in downtown Amherst, Ohio was the blank canvas that Mike Sekletar was looking for to display his artwork. He wanted to use his skills and talents to pay tribute to all veterans, and decided to do so by creating a mural of an iconic photograph – “Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima”. “I wanted to give back to veterans, and for me that’s through art and painting,” Sekletar said. “The photo is so iconic. Everyone has seen it, and it signifies something different for everyone. For me, it signifies freedom.” His father, John, is a veteran who served in the Navy in the Vietnam War, and is a member of the American Legion in Amherst.

Sekletar and friend Ryan Shannon received permission last August to start the project. The process took nearly three months and more than 250 hours to complete. After completing the outline, the mural started coming to life. However, after taking a closer look, Sekletar envisioned color through a symbol. A 5-by-8-foot flag featuring 48 stars, to stay true to the photo, now flows from a 14-foot aluminum flag pole that extends from the building’s roof line.

SUCCESS

A granite plaque is feature on the far right of the mural that reads, “We will never forget the courage, honor, and sacrifice of the men and women who served our country for our freedom.” “People ask me if I’ll paint another mural like this, and I say maybe on a smaller scale because I want this to be the only one like it; I want it to be one of a kind,” Sekletar said. “I really feel privileged and honored to be able to do something like this for our veterans.”

