

# COUNTRY AT HEART

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Susan Dailey gets a lift to finish her sky-high project.

## COUNTRY AT ART

# Towering Exposure

Muralist takes her painting to new heights for all to see.

Some artists dream of displaying their paintings in big-city galleries, but Susan Dailey is happy to create towering art in the heart of rural Colorado.

Her mural depicting a farm family at harvesttime graces a historic grain elevator in the small town of Berthoud, about 45 miles from Denver. "Facing such a huge canvas can be overwhelming," Susan says. "But I like the element of surprise as I see the pieces coming together."





**Colorado wildlife**, like the deer depicted in this mosaic, flourish along the St. Vrain Creek in Longmont. Artists Susan Dailey and Juli Schrader crafted handmade tiles to piece together the nature-inspired work for a community park.

The Fort Collins resident devoted 10 months to this public art project. Working with fellow artist Eleanor Yates, Susan created a 55-foot-tall mural, *Berthoud's Roots*, on the elevator, which was built around 1925.

"It's a tribute to both the town's agricultural past and the present spirit of the community," Susan says. "The round hay bales symbolize farming techniques practiced today. We used local people as our models."

Once the community approved a mock-up, the artists divided it into a grid and enlarged each segment into a 5-foot-square cloth panel, then painted the panels. "We worked from bucket lifts, adhering 55 panels to the concrete elevator wall with acrylic gel," Susan says. "After that, we painted the finishing touches and added a coat of weather-resistant sealer."

Tourists have to crane their necks to take in the larger-than-life scene.

"That's what I enjoy about painting on a grand scale," Susan says. "Viewers feel surrounded by

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—SUSAN DAILEY

the painting—as if they could walk in and become part of it.”

Her first brush with agriculture came during childhood visits to her grandparents' farm. "Those happy memories and pictures from their photo albums inspire many of my paintings," she says.

Travelers in Colorado, Idaho and New Mexico find Susan's creations cropping up in many unexpected places. A multimedia artist, she's created public murals, mosaics and sculptures to decorate schools, libraries, parks and even

a walking trail underpass. Recently a third-generation farm family commissioned her to create a tribute to their heritage wrapped around their grain bin.

"I've always loved Western landscapes—the wildlife and vast open spaces," Susan says. By preserving them in paint, "I hope people will remember the importance of good stewardship, so this beauty will remain for generations." ■



**Cooped up** with one of her chickens in her studio, Susan plucks a tune. View her work at [susankdailey.com](http://susankdailey.com).

DEER: SUSAN DAILEY; STUDIO PORTRAIT: MIKE WITTMER