

Hidden mural from the 1880s uncovered

by Michal Ruprecht
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Carol Lopez, owner of the trinket shop The Peaceable Kingdom, knew there was hidden mural dating to the 1880s when she bought a property at 210 S. Main St. more than 30 years ago. However, since the store's closing in May 2017, Mark Wilfong, her son, has been renovating the building and, in this process, uncovering the mural.

The entire mural is 8 feet by 8 feet and it features a king standing on a lion. Wilfong said the first tenant was a German beer hall, so the king may be a symbol for German beer and brewing.

Though only a 3-foot-by-3-foot section of the mural is visible, Wilfong hosted an unveiling of the mural on March 10 to take part in **Youth Art Month**.

“That 3-foot-by-3-foot section that you can see with the foot exposed... It just came right off and I called the art conservator who I had spoken with previously, Parma Conservation out of Chicago, and she immediately changed her tune when she found out that it was in good shape and she said, ‘Stop, stop, stop. Don’t touch anything else,’” Wilfong said. “And that’s it. We’ve been waiting to see what to do next.”

Ann Arbor resident Louisa Jenista went to see the mural at the unveiling. She said she was excited to see it and hopes future generations have the opportunity to see the mural and that she will be able to see the entire mural one day.

“I think that it is important to preserve this mural because it is part of Ann Arbor’s early history,” Jenista wrote in an email interview with The Daily. “I think that it would be neat to frame the portion that remains and/or finish the rest of the mural so that we can see what it looked like in its original state.”

Wilfong said because his grandfather, Carlos Lopez, who [began](#) teaching at the University of Michigan in 1945, was a muralist, he appreciates the importance of preserving the art.

“We have an art background enough to know just because the mural’s behind drywall, doesn’t mean you go ripping it (mural) off,” Wilfong said. “It has to be protected and has to be refurbished, you know, conserved.”

Though Engineering graduate student Chenlan Wang has never seen the mural, she said she went to The Peaceable Kingdom several times before it closed and would like to return to the location to see the mural.

“If I have a chance, I would like to visit it as it was dated to 1880,” Wang said via email. “It would be very interesting to look at it in person and learn more about the history and stories behind it.”

Wilfong said he hopes to have more viewing days and host pop-up galleries in the future with University students’ art featured. He added he is looking for a new tenant, and hopes whoever he finds appreciates the history of the building.

“I’m a history geek,” Wilfong said. “I just want to spark conversations, I want to share it with people. I just think it’s really neat. I like history, I think it behooves all of us to stop especially in this modern world and, you know, stop looking at the screens and look up at that mural and kind of take a pause.”

Wilfong said he saw himself as the building’s caretaker, noting he wanted to keep it around for his “grandchildren’s grandchildren.”

“It’s one of the very few pieces in Ann Arbor that hasn’t been torn apart or put back together,” Wilfong said.

Wilfong said he started an online fundraising [campaign](#) on March 9 to raise money to restore the mural. He said he hopes the mural can help connect people with their family history.

“It starts conversations that give people a sense of history and where they came from,” Wilfong said. “I think we’re kind of lacking that and if just by taking care of a picture and letting people see it, I can spark those conversations. That would be a great victory.”

