

MA: What inspired you to create this mural?

Hells Gibson: This is the third mural in an ambitious project where I plan to paint a mural in every State of America.

I want to create work that makes people smile, brings happiness into their daily activities and celebrates life, in a way that can be interpreted however people want. I've always loved seeing nature grow in unexpected places; weeds growing through concrete, flowers blooming in urban environments - The phrase "*Flowers Grow in...*" is both literal and symbolic. It's about resilience, growth, and the idea that beauty can emerge in unexpected places.

MA: Why did you choose such a bold pink background?

HG: Pink is my signature colour, and in fact this exact shade of pink is unique to me – I made it myself and use it in every mural I do, I even called it Pink Hells!

It's interesting, pink has a way of demanding attention unlike a lot of other colours. Against the grey infrastructure and muted surroundings, it feels almost rebellious, proud and unapologetic. Pink always gets a reaction, add gold to that and becomes impossible to ignore.

The wall sits alongside a busy road, surrounded by concrete, traffic, and construction so I love that this shade of pink stops drivers and pedestrians in their tracks; a moment of surprise and a flash of colour that interrupts their routine in a positive way.

MA: The flowers seem to weave through the letters. What does that represent?

HG: The juxtaposition of the crisp, computer generated font that I use in all my work and the fluid, hand painted flowers is something that I'm exploring a lot more, and I find it fascinating that the interweaving of the flowers and words is something everyone has noticed

I don't want the flowers to just be a decoration, or the words to feel like they are a separate element of the mural; they're all participants in the message. The growing through and around the typography, almost taking it over, is a metaphor for nature, creativity, and community. They find cracks, openings, and opportunities to flourish. Just like the people who live here.

While painting my first mural in this series (in Brattleboro, VT) a guy told me that he saw the flowers as representative of the people of the state, and I loved that! Public art works best when it speaks to the people who live with it every day. I want residents to see their state name and flower and feel a sense of ownership. Whether you've lived here your whole life or just arrived, the mural says, "This place grows things; plants, people, ideas, stories."

MA: How did the location influence the design?

HG: The wall is incredibly long, so the design needed to read at different speeds. Someone walking by can appreciate the flowers and details, while someone driving past only has a few seconds to absorb the message. Large lettering and high contrast were essential, while the subtle fading of the flowers add depth and detail that can be seen up close.

MA: What was the biggest challenge?

HG: Scale. A mural this size requires constant adjustment and a lot of stepping back to check proportion. A flower that looks perfect up close might disappear from across the street. You're always moving back, reassessing, and thinking about how the piece works from multiple viewpoints.

Oh, and the constant traffic; it's an extremely busy road, which can be tough to create on, but the heavy flow of vehicles became the thing that kept me going. Almost everyone who drove past shouted compliments, words of encouragement or even stopped to thank me for adding beauty to their city, it was really moving.

MA: What do you hope people feel when they see it?

HG: A little lighter and a little more connected to where they are. Public art can't solve everything, but it can transform an ordinary commute into a moment of joy. If someone looks up from their day and smiles, even for a second, then the mural has done its job.

MA: If the mural could say one thing beyond the words painted on it, what would it be?

HG: "Growth is happening here, even when you don't notice it. So, keep going, keep growing, and keep smiling."