



# WALL ART

**A colorful tour of Cornell's dorm murals**

BY ALEXANDRA BOND '12  
PHOTOS BY LISA BANLAKI FRANK

**F**or decades, students have been leaving their mark on the Hill through an informal tradition of painting murals in their on-campus housing. Adorning the walls of many residence halls and program houses are hundreds of paintings by former occupants—cartoons to landscapes, abstract patterns to album covers, original artwork to copies of famed masterpieces. “They’re done in the spirit of bringing the arts into the building,” says Meurcie Redding, last year’s director of Risley Residential College, the art-themed dorm that has the single largest concentration of murals on campus (including the one at left). “Students will paint everything

from the sprinkler pipes to the doors. There are even murals on the ceiling.” Often, the artwork reflects core values of the dorms and houses they decorate, such as the nature-themed works in Ecology House or the national flags adorning the Latino Living Center; many others center around inside jokes lost on viewers who aren’t in the know. While some are signed and dated, most lack identifying information, their makers unknown to the students who live with them day and night.

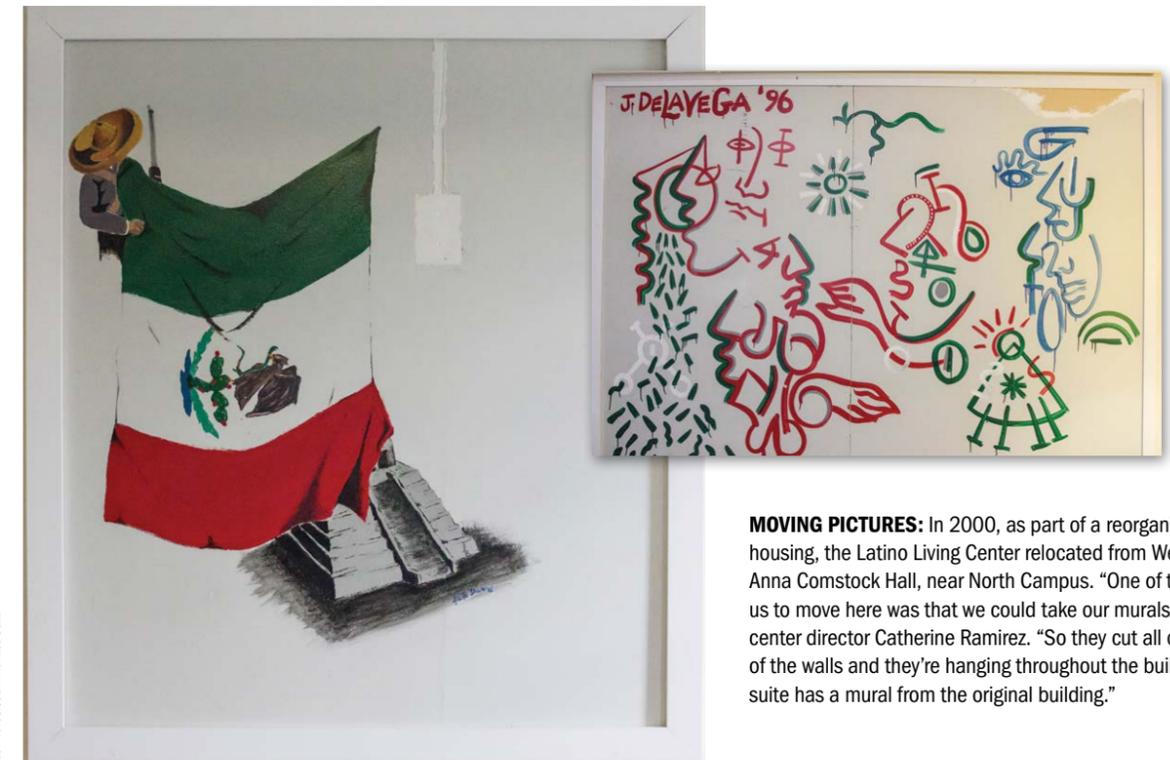
*Did you paint any of these murals? Do you know who did? Do you have favorites not included here? See more photos and add your comments at: [cornellalumnmagazine.com/wall-art](http://cornellalumnmagazine.com/wall-art).*



**THE TRADITION CONTINUES:** In Clara Dickson Hall, Daytawn Campbell '20 (above right), an Arts and Sciences student and avid artist, recently completed a mural featuring a mash-up of images: an iconic scene of Martin Luther King Jr. giving a speech paired with Michael Jordan going for a jump shot. "Cornell can be tough sometimes, and I think some people get discouraged," Campbell says, chatting with CAM while working on his oeuvre toward the end of spring semester. "The idea is to inspire people who see it to go be the best at what they do." Of his twin subjects, he says, "Even though they did something completely different, they both dreamt big." Next door in Jameson Hall, Isabella Yannuzzi '20 (below) and her seven roommates covered the entire hallway of their suite—floor to ceiling—with a mural composed of flowers, bees, barnyard animals, and the night sky.



**FAMILY TREE:** On a return trip to campus last spring, Aimee Buduan Hartono '06 brought her nine-month-old daughter to visit a mural she helped paint in Donlon Hall more than ten years ago. "I'm from California, so I wasn't used to the changes in the leaves," she says. "I wanted to paint a tree that represented that." With the help of a dormmate—Hartono recalls only that his name was Brian—she completed the mural in just a few days.



**MOVING PICTURES:** In 2000, as part of a reorganization of student housing, the Latino Living Center relocated from West Campus to Anna Comstock Hall, near North Campus. "One of the conditions for us to move here was that we could take our murals with us," says center director Catherine Ramirez. "So they cut all of the murals out of the walls and they're hanging throughout the building. Almost every suite has a mural from the original building."

LLC PHOTOS: JULIA PACHECO COLE



**LEAVING HOME:** The hallways of Ecology House feature many nature scenes, including lush plants, the night sky, a tiger, and a forest populated with myriad creatures. Plans are currently in the works to decorate a basement study room with images from C.S. Lewis's "Narnia" books.



**ROOM OF ONE'S OWN:** During finals week of spring 2015, about ten residents of Jameson Hall teamed up to paint what Kayla Niccum '18 describes as a "friendly, homey, cozy living room" in a lounge area. While there had been an initial plan to create a coded message from the volumes on the bookcase—which include *Lolita*, *The Hobbit*, and *Fahrenheit 451*—in the end, Niccum says, "it was just whatever popped into our heads."



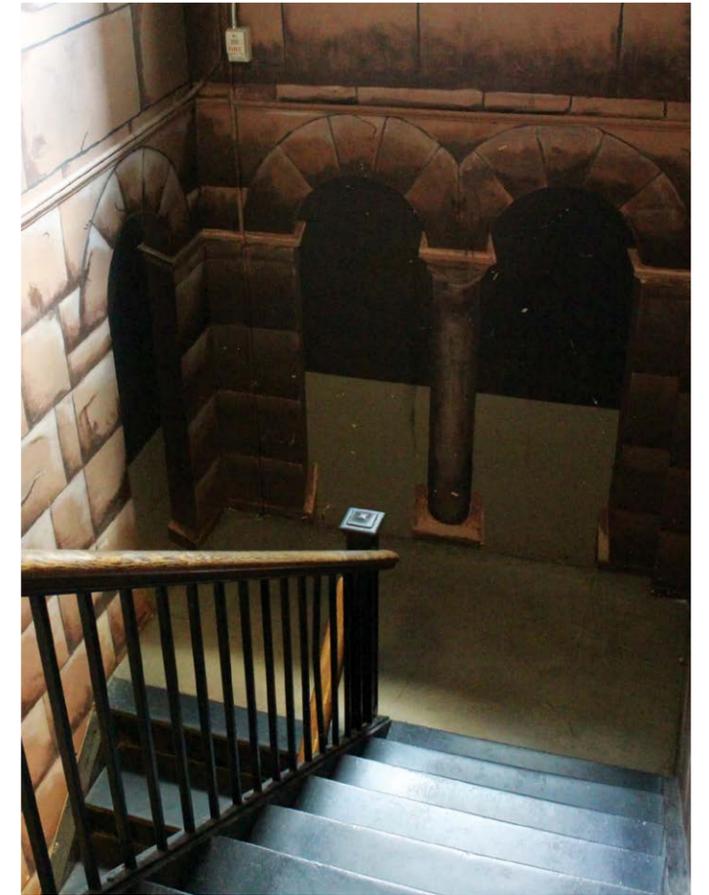
**WRITTEN IN STONE:** A common room in Ujamaa, the African American program house, features this reimagining of Mount Rushmore with the faces of (from left) Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr.



**WORDS OF WISDOM:** Balch Hall's "You Are" series spreads positive messages throughout the corridors. "It really celebrates what Balch stands for," says residence hall director Perdita Das, who hopes to see the series expanded.



**TITLE CASE:** Many residences feature murals that incorporate the building's name into the artwork, like this one from Cascadilla Hall.



**CREATIVE MINDS:** Given that Risley Residential College is dedicated to the arts, it's no surprise that murals grace many of its surfaces, exploring a wide variety of themes from the classical to the whimsical. The works include a tribute (opposite page, top) to former resident Jennifer Tzemis '96, who died in the September 11 terrorist attacks. The Tardis from "Doctor Who" (opposite page, bottom left) conceals a door, while a staircase (right) is adorned with *trompe l'oeil* paintings of stonework. A mural advocating tolerance (bottom right) features mirrors that let viewers incorporate their own faces into the art.





**ROCK ON:** The vintage album art immortalized on dorm walls includes Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* in Clara Dickson Hall (top) as well as several murals in Donlon, such as homages to (clockwise from below) the Steve Miller Band; Emerson, Lake & Palmer; Robin Trower; Styx; and Yes.

