



South Florida Outings: “Bell Mural” by Tristan Eaton at Alexander Lofts

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by Sandra Hale Schulman

Take a historic property, add contemporary artistic flair, and the result is the unique building that houses the new Alexander Lofts at 326 Fern Street in West Palm Beach, FL.

Constructed in 1926, the brick building served as the old Southern Bell Telephone regional headquarters, and now goes by the name “[Alexander Lofts](#)” to acknowledge the inventor of the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell.

This new apartment building, catering to the tastes of a new breed of younger city dwellers, has been turning heads for months, thanks to the massive seven-story mural by [Tristan Eaton](#) that was completed in June 2015, created to honor Bell and his life’s work and legacy.



“Bell Mural” by Tristan Eaton at Alexander Lofts.



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Internationally known as an urban street artist and designer, Eaton transformed the formerly blank 7,000-square-foot wall into a tribute to the father of telecommunications, Alexander Graham Bell.

His multi-layered, collage-like approach to portraiture allowed him to combine multiple elements and styles. The mural features parts of Bell’s face, hyper-realism, extreme graphic design, vintage Americana patterns from Bell’s early days, historic Southern Bell Company brand imprints and logos, plus diagrams of Bell’s original Harmonic Telegraph schematics.

Taken together, all these elements create an enormous, well planned mural, defining the building and downtown for years to come. The mural took Eaton 12 days to create, using more than 500 cans of spray paint while swinging from vertigo-defying, seven-stories-high scaffolding.

“Alexander Graham Bell revolutionized how we communicate when he invented the Harmonic

Telegraph in 1874, thus leading to the modern-day telephone and changing the world forever,” according to an artist’s statement by Eaton on his website. “For me, art has always been about communication. Art is a more emotional and visual form of communication, but it has the power to connect us just the same.”



Artist Tristan Eaton.

“Within this mural I have sewn together many images both relevant to Bell and the specific location of the mural itself,” the statement continues. “Within the mural you’ll find Bell himself, selected branding from historic Southern Bell design (including the “Spirit of Communication” illustration from the cover of their phone books during the 1940s), diagrams from the original models of Bell’s Harmonic Telegraph in 1874, the Northern Mocking Bird (The Florida State bird), an American pin-up inspired by George Petty’s illustrations glamorizing the use of the telephone, and a selection of graphic patterns from Bell’s era.”

Eaton concludes his statement with his hope that the mural will be “a powerful landmark that brings beauty and glory to both the neighborhood and Bell’s legacy in the city of West Palm Beach.”

This isn’t Eaton’s first oversized mural. In New York, Eaton painted the modern surrealist mural *4 Horse Women of the Apocalypse* in Brooklyn and a mural of the Statue of Liberty on the corner of Mulberry and Canal Street in Manhattan. Eaton’s work is held in the collection of MoMA and his art is exhibited internationally. He is based in Los Angeles.

BASIC FACTS: Tristan Eaton’s mural paying tribute to Alexander Graham Bell is located on the side of [Alexander Lofts](#), 326 Fern Street, West Palm Beach, FL 33401.

To see more of his work, visit www.tristaneaton.net.

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