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New Pop-Up Exhibition Features Paintings of Lost Downtown Vistas

A gift from Regions Bank, works by artist Jim Quinlan bring the past to life

ORLANDO, Fla. — January 13, 2024 — The Orange County Regional History Center’s latest pop-up exhibition, *The City Beautiful: Scenes of Downtown Orlando*, offers visitors a time trip back to well-known vistas from the heart of Orlando as they appeared in the 1930s through the 1950s.

A recent gift to the History Center’s collection from Regions Bank, the exhibition displays five detailed paintings by Central Florida artist Jim Quinlan (1926-2018), who created them in the 1980s using images from earlier decades as resource material.

An architectural illustrator who studied at the Kansas City Art Institute and worked as a staff artist at Walt Disney World, Quinlan displayed great skill in bringing the scenes to life with accuracy, down to the tailfins on 1950s cars and the neon signs for popular hotels and businesses.

One of his paintings features the beautiful 1924 bandstand at Lake Eola, torn down in 1957. Designed by pathbreaking 1920s Orlando architects Ida Ryan and Isabel Roberts, the innovative structure displayed the influence of Roberts’s mentor, Frank Lloyd Wright, and appeared to float on the water.

Another of Quinlan’s paintings depicts the downtown skyline seen across Lake Eola at a time when the 11-story Angebilt Hotel towered over its surroundings. Other works in the exhibition highlight Orange Avenue scenes and feature the Beacham Theater in its heyday as Orlando’s premier movie palace, the Streamline Moderne style of the former Rutland’s building at Orange and Washington Street, and the busy commercial intersection of Orange and Central Boulevard in the 1950s.

Presented in the History Center’s lobby, such short-run, pop-up displays “offer a great way to showcase recent acquisitions and topics that might not fit into a major exhibition but still tell an interesting story,” says Pam Schwartz, the museum’s executive director.

“For years we enjoyed displaying this artwork in our downtown Orlando branch, and when we recently renovated the branch space, we knew we had an opportunity to share these paintings with all of the Central Florida community by working with the Orange County Regional History Center,” said Regions Bank Orlando Market Executive Chris Hurst. “We are honored to make this donation and share these paintings with our neighbors while helping preserve the rich history of Central Florida.”

The City Beautiful: Scenes of Downtown Orlando is slated to be on display in the History Center lobby through March 31, 2024. To learn more about the museum and many programs and events, please visit TheHistoryCenter.org.

“Regions Bank is proud to be part of Orlando’s history – and its future,” added Hurst. “As our area continues to welcome new residents and businesses, it’s important that we preserve reflections of

Orlando's growth over time – and this special exhibition showcasing Jim Quinlan's paintings serves as a visual time capsule for us to enjoy today and share with people for years to come.”

The Orange County Regional History Center, housed in a historic courthouse at 65 E. Central Blvd. in downtown Orlando, features four floors of permanent and special exhibitions. The museum is a Smithsonian Institution affiliate and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. It is funded in part by Orange County Government through the Community & Family Services Department under Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings and the Board of County Commissioners. The Historical Society of Central Florida Inc. is supported by United Arts of Central Florida and sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture. For more information, visit TheHistoryCenter.org.

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