

Michael Cooper

Extreme muralist who craves the next wall

By Deanna Larson

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Ask Michael Cooper how to beautify or camouflage any vertical surface and he'll have two words of advice: illusion and paint. Cooper moved to Nashville from his hometown of Memphis about 13 years ago, "and started painting murals almost immediately." His local work includes murals on the side of the You Greek Me Greek store on West End, a 145-foot mural at the Church Street Pocket Park, a 100-foot mural for the Arcade, and the design of the Hard Rock Café mural. Cooper received a BFA from Memphis State in contract interior design and now owns Murals and More, a business specializing in residential and commercial murals, trompe l'oeil, and faux finishes.


Cooper has a blended family of six children with his wife Mickie, but they "recently became empty-nesters" which no doubt allows him more time to paint. Cooper also likes to compete with his hands: he plays competitive racquetball and badminton, he skis, goes boating and took up ice hockey last year. "And to think that I was in the band at Christian Brothers High School!" Cooper said. He also plays guitar, likes to read and hates "ignorance and prejudice and people who think that teachers are well paid." 



Photo courtesy of Mickie Cooper

INSIDE INFO

What do people assume about you that isn't true?

That I do drugs. Been that way since high school.

What have you learned about human nature while doing your job?

People don't believe the "Wet Paint" signs.

What's the nicest thing anyone has ever done for you?

My wife married me. Although I tend to look at it more as pity.

What talent do you wish you had?

I wish I could sing. In fact, a lot of people wish I could sing, especially when I do.

I can't go 24 hours without ... ?

A banana.

What is the biggest rush you've ever experienced?

Walking through St. Peter's. Absolutely breathtaking, to think that human hands created such works of art.

Who would you like to trade lives with for a day?

David Letterman. Jeez, what a tough job.

What three things do you want to do before you die?

Score a hat trick for my ice hockey team (actually, just scoring once would be a coup); live and learn in Italy for two years; make peace with my kids.

If money was no object, what would you do or buy?

Find a teacher and take art classes in Italy. I've never really had any lessons at all. Wait a minute ... Bob Ross is dead, isn't he? I guess I'll have to look for someone else.

What is your favorite color and why?

Cobalt blue. It reminds me of a romantic, cloudless autumn sky, cool and peaceful.

Who or what are your biggest influences?

Richard Haas — huge, imaginative projects. Also, Diego Rivera for his compositions. Bill Cosby and Gary Larson for their brilliant humor.