

# Muralist puts whimsy and fantasy on walls, ceilings

By **MARILEE SPANJIAN**

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**BRENTWOOD** — You may have seen Michael Cooper's artwork.

Not in any gallery, but on the side of a building or on the ceiling of someone's home. Or maybe at Franklin Road Academy, Brentwood YMCA Teen Center, San Antonio Taco Company in Nashville, or Dollar General's corporate headquarters in Kentucky, to name a few of his clients.

Cooper is one of Williamson County's secret treasures and one of the South's most respected muralists. He can turn a flat, nondescript surface into a lively town square filled with old buildings of varying sizes, people on sidewalks, street signs and window awnings. He took the side of Nashville Foot and Ankle Center and turned it into a large aquarium with a huge crane lowering a dolphin into the water. He creates people where there aren't any, doors and windows where there's nothing but a flat surface. And he turns concrete blocks into the perfect sky.

"My specialties are trompe l'oeil and faux finishes," he said.

And while Cooper's known for his large-scale

creations, he even adds his artistic flair to a simple celestial spray of stars and planets on the media room ceiling in "The Powell," David Weekley's home in this year's Parade of Homes. Painting freehand using artist acrylics in teals, deep blue, and brick red, Cooper created a whimsical ceiling to compliment the drive-in theater motif. He used a drop shadow to make the planets and stars appear to be falling off the ceiling. And in the "teenage daughter's room, who's supposed to be a budding artist," he painted freehand teal flowers with plenty of squiggles and swirls.

With 20 years experience as a commercial interior designer, Cooper understands color, perspective and visual weight. He's always been able to see the big picture. From his earliest work, Cooper showed artistic talent.

"I've never said this before to anyone, but my first was a mural in front of the school. I was in the first grade and I entered a contest. My design won. It's probably still there," he chuckled.

From that initial project, he doodled his way through school on the back of notebooks.

"I remember getting slapped on the palms of my

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SHELLEY MAYS / STAFF

Artist Michael Cooper paints the ceiling of the media room in David Weekley's home at the Parade of Homes.

# Muralist brings whimsy and fantasy to homes

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hands," he added. Then he graduated to huge flags down the halls of his fraternity house.

Surprisingly, Cooper never aspired to be an artist.

"I was going to be a doctor all my life. But one week into chemistry class, I changed my major to interior design."

And while he continued to design commercial space, he painted murals for his children. It didn't matter where — their bedrooms or schools. Eventually, he tired of wearing a tie and the occasional three-piece suit.

"I got tired of the politics and the responsibility," he remembered. So seven years ago, he quit to start his business, Murals & More in Franklin.

For more information, contact Cooper at 591-2575. ■