

Muralist creates environments

By Richard Mize, Real Estate Editor

EDMOND — Kelley Farrar draws more on her own experience and others' every day — and paints it.

In her sixth year as a professional muralist, the 25-year-old Edmond resident's canvas is the "built environment" — homes, businesses, anything with walls.

She's an artist who paints for a living, a product of the graphic arts program at the University of Central Oklahoma and a former protege of Dr. Bob Palmer, a muralist who teaches muralists.

Farrar's clients include homeowners, David Bryan Homes and other builders and businesses including Bass Pro Shops — for which she's painted murals, outdoor scenes, of course, in Colorado, Indiana and Ohio.

She started painting for hire about six years ago while still in college. She said she didn't make much money at first, when she did jobs to build a portfolio that served as the foundation for a career that never seems like work.

Farrar is her own boss. She gives estimates on jobs only after meeting potential clients, assessing their needs and desires and doing some research. Since no two jobs are alike, she said it's impossible to give a general estimate.

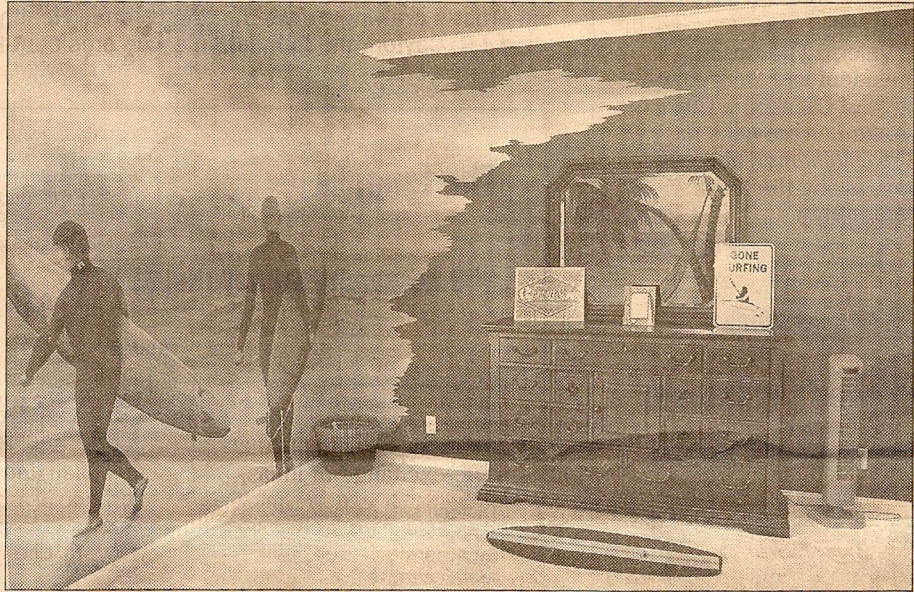
Some muralists, she said, charge by the hour. That's not her style.

Let's say a couple wanted a mural in their home, but had no clear idea.

Farrar would meet with them, camera in hand, ask them questions about their hobbies, likes and dislikes, and take some pictures of the space and any furnishings or other items that reflect their interests.

"If it's a kid's room, I try to get to know that kid. If it's a girl, is she a real girly girl?" she said in a boy's room she painted a fun beach motif in a home in Edmond.

Then she'd go home, do research — for example, if someone liked mountains, she'd look into different ranges and their features — and put together a



BY CHRIS LANDSBERGER, THE OKLAHOMAN

Another side of muralist Kelley Farrar's surfer-theme bedroom is shown Wednesday at a home in Edmond.

sketch. If the potential clients liked it, or wanted her to tinker with it, she would, then she'd name her price and proceed if they approved.

It's usually easy on her clients, she said. Meet for an interview, meet to review a sketch, meet to do the work, which can take anywhere from one day to a week or more.

She does more than paint "a" mural.

"I like to create an environment," she said, surrounded by palm trees, surfboards stuck in sand, a "surf shack" with a shark and "Jaws" reference — all on the walls of the boy's room, all from the collaboration of imagination with the boy and his parents.

Farrar works in businesses and upscale homes for the most part, but she and her sister, Tesha Arms, founded the 501(c)3 nonprofit Angels Around Town, which uses interior design and Farrar's murals to help lift the spirits of youngsters in need.

Angels Around Town operates on donations for "any child situationally affected that may put their self-esteem

and self-worth at risk. For example, children that are affected through divorce, death of a parent, foster placement, adoption or illness," 14 or younger, living within 30 miles of Edmond. For more information, or to donate, go to www.angelsaroundtown.org.

Farrar said she knew she wanted to be an artist back in high school in Cashion, but didn't know what kind — and didn't know how to make a living at it until college and she started getting jobs here and there.

Numerous muralists work in the Oklahoma City metro area, she said, although she couldn't guess how many. UCO, she said, is producing more every year.

Farrar said it would be difficult to estimate an income range for a successful commercial muralist. She said she worked for "next to nothing" when she started out, and that she knows a couple who make a combined \$60,000 after doing it for years.

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