



This mural at what is now the Hilton Hotel, 120 W. Market St., was created by Christopher Blice and Jon Edwards of Blice Edwards with the help of children in the Indianapolis Art Center's Art Reach Program in 1996.

PAINTING A SMILEY FACE



The Fishers High School library entrance.



This bee is part of a mural on the Angie's List building.

Blice Edwards brightens Indy's facades

Blice Edwards' murals figure prominently on the interiors and exteriors of several businesses around town. The partners also have done work on Cultural District projects.

"Blice Edwards brightens up Indianapolis with their extraordinary, site-specific artworks," said Tamara Zahn, president of Indianapolis Downtown Inc. "They add a smile to Indianapolis."

Here, some of their more recognizable works:

Good Morning Mama's

More than six Caribbean colors like aqua, yellow and pink create the Good Morning Mama's exterior that includes a larger-than-life happy blue bird. "The building was originally a Phillip's 66 service station and covered in motor oil," Edwards said. "Carol and Howard Leuer, the owners, knew they wanted a happy bluebird and to convey a retro mom-and-pop diner."

Angie's List

From the design phase to painting, a Blice Edwards mural can take 10 days to three weeks to complete. To investigate the "ghost images" on this East Washing-

ton Street building, the pair spent several months doing research. "Trying to decipher what was there originally was tough," Edwards said.

Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit, St. Vincent Hospital, Carmel

"There was a couple who had twin boys in the ICU who were fairly critical," Edwards said. "When they were well enough to go home, the parents were so grateful that they donated money to the ICU for artwork. A hospital can be sterile and cool-looking. It's for the worried parents who are in there — comforting and soothing colors and images."

Meridian Hills Country Club mural

"We were there about 10 days with a crew of three," Blice said. "The interior designer was Peter Whitten from Kittles, who's a really great designer. Peter had in mind that he wanted a landscape." The mural, Whitten said, was inspired by an Arts and Crafts border manufactured by Bradbury and Bradbury in California. "I think their interpretation and execution was splendid," he said.

Star photos and photos provided by Christopher Blice

PICTURE

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fashioned way" — by hand, he said. Eight days after the Noblesville native graduated from the Columbus College of Art & Design with a degree in graphic and advertising design, he headed east. He met artist and social activist Keith Haring on his first day in New York, and said "I got to even work on an account for Cher — her infomercial beauty products."

When he met Blice, he was making \$8 an hour, painting event and party props and backdrops for The Set Up and Company. "It was the first place I painted large-scale, and I loved it. My first project was 'Christmas Around the World' at the Toy and Hobby Gift Show at the State Fairgrounds.

"I was painting these 4- by 8-foot panels of Kwanzaa and all that, but it was so fun. Then, I went to that party and met Chris."

Blice recalled telling him, "I'll pay you \$100 a day if you come and work for me. And here we are today."

They formed their company in January 1993, and completed their first project: the jungle scene at the Meridian Street home. Their business grew rapidly through word-of-mouth. "The home interiors and projects just started building," Blice said.

From small powder rooms in homes to 8-foot-tall outdoor business murals, they entertain any idea, work on any scale, in any home on any budget. They have clients from Naples, Fla., to Scottsdale, Ariz., and from Pittsburgh to San Francisco.

Working with commercial clients — from the cozy, upscale French Pharmacie boutique in Broad Ripple to St. Vincent Hospital — Blice Edwards helps create businesses' identities and send messages. But the bulk of its work, about 60 percent, comes from private clients. "We do color consultation for interior and exterior, choosing colors for people's homes, even their gutters," Blice said.

Among homeowners, the biggest demand Blice Edwards has is for English landscapes or Italian countryside scenes portrayed in dining rooms. The results are elegant and timeless, like they were plucked from an English estate themselves.

"And aging. In a beautiful, beautiful new home with beautiful, beautiful woodwork . . . and they want it beat-up," Blice said.

"So," Edwards added, "it looks like it's well-worn and that the home's been here a long time and not stark, white, echoey, cavernous."

Hand-painted, decorative medallions or murals on ceilings are also popular. Painting at awkward angles, cleaning up and disrupting activity at the client's home can make the task tedious, so the pair now create ceilings on canvas in a huge home studio.

"Now a mural that could take weeks or months takes less time. Instead of having to go into the client's home every day with paint buckets, ladders and dust, we do it all in the studio, then install," Blice explained. "It can be taken down. It's an investment that can be passed down."

Each project is unique

One thing the duo doesn't do is copy another's work — or their own. "No two projects are ever alike," Edwards said.

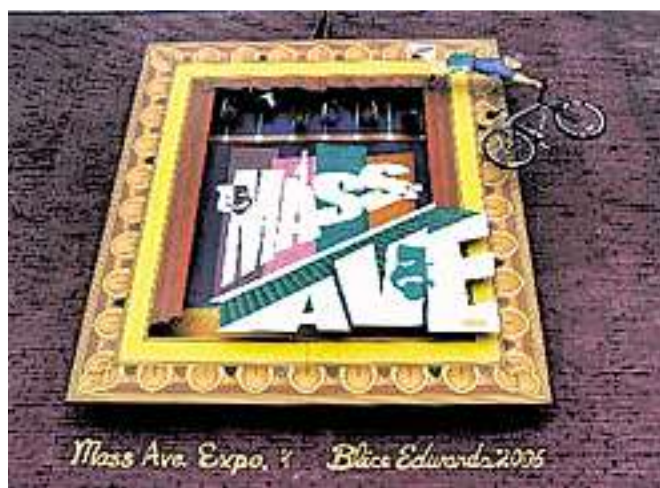
"Ever," Blice stressed. "We never do two ceilings the same, for example. Someone will tell us they love another client's ceiling. They want it. They can't have it. We'll change it. Everything is hand-done and one-of-a-kind."

Edwards added, "Which keeps it from being boring. We always have a color or design solution for a space, a home, a project."

Blice creates the concepts for and visualizes projects, while Edwards executes them.

"I'm really good at taking his ideas and bringing them to life," Edwards said. "But, when I'm standing in front of a blank wall and I'm looking at it, I don't know what to do."

"And, Mr. Magic there, he's amazing," Blice said. "He brings everything to reality."



The Mass Ave. Arts District mural piece.



Wall mural at Good Morning Mama's Cafe.

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