

# Town working to restore murals

BY JESSICA STRINGER  
STAFF WRITER

Biking to work early one morning as a teenager, artist Michael Brown saw a Franklin Street sky that inspired the first mural he painted for Chapel Hill in 1989.

Nineteen years and 20 murals later, Chapel Hill groups are working together to restore Brown's iconic murals that appear on the sides of many local buildings.

The Downtown Partnership, the Preservation Society of Chapel Hill and the Chapel Hill Historical Society are raising money and awareness for the murals.

Ernest Dollar, executive director of the Preservation Society, said he became interested in preserving the murals after he heard Brown speak about his work last fall.

He said he realized then "how integral the murals were to Chapel Hill."

Dollar said Chapel Hill residents responded overwhelmingly in support of the murals, "from a simple yes to really wonderful emotional stories about the murals."

Brown's last mural, painted on

the side of Pantana Bob's, shows a few public school students and community members who helped Brown paint his murals.

Meg McGurk, assistant director of the Downtown Partnership, said that she can see the Pantana Bob's mural from her office but that her favorite mural is the blue mural of the Franklin Street sky at the corner of Rosemary and Columbia streets.

"If you ask anyone, they have a favorite mural," McGurk said.

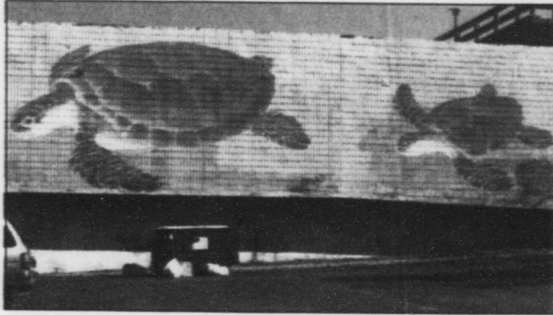
When McGurk recently saw a photo of the mural from when it was first painted, she said she realized the need for restoration.

"It just sorta struck me how much the mural had deteriorated and how much there was to the mural that I didn't see now."

McGurk said Brown recently assessed each of his murals to figure out what it would take to restore each one. Some murals need more work than others, Brown said.

So far, the Orange County Arts Commission has donated \$1,500 for the restoration, which was matched by the Downtown Partnership.

UNC alumna and longtime



Chapel Hill resident Laura Shmania said her favorite is the young musician mural on Studio Supply on West Franklin Street. She said it reminds her of being a University student in the late 1970s, when musicians would play on Franklin Street.

"I often pause in front of this mural and listen for the strains of their music," Shmania said in an e-mail interview. She has a Web site with photos of every mural.

Dollar said the next step in restoration is to contact the building and business owners to see if they will allow the murals to be restored.

Dollar said an adopt-a-mural program will allow people to donate goods or services to restore

their favorite mural.

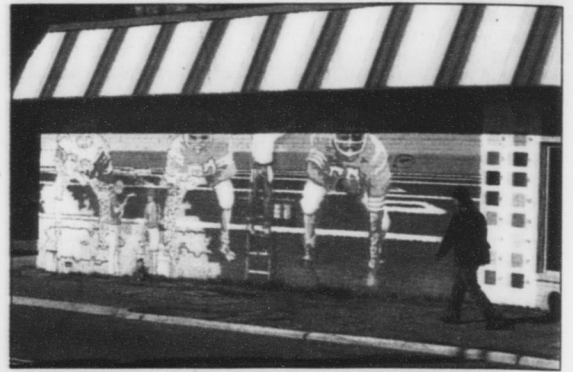
McGurk said part of the mural campaign is the upcoming Downtown Chapel Hill Youth Art Project, where young people will be able to create their own paper murals that will hang downtown in the spring and summer.

"It is an opportunity for the kids of the kids who helped Michael Brown to have their art hanging," McGurk said.

Brown said that if the money for supplies can be raised, he will definitely help out.

"They mean so much to me on some many levels."

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).



DTH/ADAM SHERWOOD

Chapel Hill artist Michael Brown has painted more than 20 murals in the town, including "Sea Turtles" on Columbia Street, "Painted Painters" on Pantana Bob's and "Musical Youth" on Studio Supply.

**Gail Tsukiyama**  
author of "The Samurai's Garden" and "The Street of a Thousand Blossoms"  
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Donovan Lounge  
Greenlaw 223  
5:30 pm

## Carolina Sports Menu



### SOFTBALL

Wed. 2/20 vs. Campbell at 3pm & 5pm

### WOMEN'S TENNIS

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Sun. 2/24 vs. Notre Dame at 12pm

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Fri. 2/22 vs. Florida at 7pm

### WOMEN'S LACROSSE

Sat. 2/23 vs. Albany NY at 1pm

### WRESTLING

Sat. 2/23 vs. The Citadel at 1pm  
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### TRACK & FIELD

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### MEN'S TENNIS

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