

MURALS
FROM PAGE C1

bee is mowing a lawn. Lady bugs, ants, caterpillars, turtles, frogs, dragonflies and butterflies look as if they are flying around the room. The mural is painted in green, yellow and blue with hints of red.

A mini-mural - a nighttime sky with crescent moons, dragonflies, stars, animals and the words, "goodnight, sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite" was painted above Ben's crib on the ceiling.

"It's amazing," Tanya Chisholm said. "I love it and I'm just so proud of it. Every time anybody comes over, I bring them up to show them."

A mural takes two days to several weeks to complete, with five to six hours of painting per day, Fillmore said. The whimsical frog mural was done in June and took about two weeks.

Fillmore said she'll return to the customer's house, if needed, to add small details such as flowers (if the baby turns out to be a girl instead of a boy), usually without an extra charge.

After studying art and design, Fillmore began doing custom murals part-time five years ago. In June she made it her full-time business.

"I've always loved art, and always wanted to be in art, so when some family members started getting pregnant, I volunteered to do their rooms, that's how it got started," Fillmore said.

"I can't imagine being happier at a job than doing what I do. I want people to have a feeling when they walk in the room that it's a cheerful, warm, comfortable environment."

Fillmore uses a non-toxic, acrylic, semi-sheer paint, which she says "isn't bumpy on the wall," so customers won't see any texture or any image raised on the surface, in case they want to paint over or modify it later on.

She says murals are a better choice than wallpaper because "it's more original. Everything is custom."

"If you do wallpaper, sure it'll look nice, but it's not as personal as working with someone one-on-one to create



LOIS PRIMEAU | STATE PHOTOGRAPHER

Lois Primeau shows off her portfolio of faux finishing and mural work.

this for your child's room." The average cost of Fillmore's murals is \$350. Smaller murals cost as little as \$150.

PRIME PLEASURES

After studying at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit, Lois Primeau of Huntington Woods began doing faux finishing and murals. She has had her own studio in Royal Oak for the past five years.

Primeau's prize piece is in William Beaumont Hospital's Prompt Care pediatric emergency waiting room in Royal Oak.

With a seashore background, she illustrated a young boy daydreaming, with the illusion of him looking at himself in the clouds, lying on a sleeping lion. It allows visitors to briefly escape whatever negative feelings they may have.

"Although this mural is one of her favorites, Primeau said, "my fondest wish is that no one would ever see it, because it's

in an emergency room." Primeau often plays Hawaiian-ballad style music while she works, such as that by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole, whose melody and verses inspire her. Fairy tales and whimsical themes seem to be Primeau's specialty.

"This is my insanity. I get to have fun instead of work every day."

She often creates a three-dimensional effect, also known as trompe l'oeil ("to fool the eye") with many of her murals, giving them more depth. It's what Primeau says makes her characters "come to life." Curtains, drawn at the corners and certain sides of walls, create the illusion of "seeing beyond the wall."

"I always know when I've achieved my goal, it's when it feels me."

And she "sticks with the program." If it's an African jungle look she wants to convey, then

MURALISTS

- "Murals by Lori" (Royal Oak area)
Lori Fillmore, (248) 588-0839, e-mail Murals7@yahoo.com
- "Two Frog Studios" (Huntington Woods)
Lois Primeau, (248) 709-4200 or (248) 398-0550
- "Upon a Wall" (Plymouth)
Joe and Jennifer Rutherford, (734) 354-9350, Web site www.uponawall.com

HANDCRAFTED FINISHES

- "Faux Looks" (Plymouth)
Peggy Darrach, (734) 414-0312 - Venetian plastering, "marbling," color washing
- Claudia Hunter (Southfield), (248) 356-3589 - design/painting services
- "Brush Yourself Off" (Farmington)
Nancy Schummer, (248) 477-6196, fax (248) 477-7661, e-mail nlschummer@aol.com

all of the birds and insects are African. She doesn't mix themes.

Primeau says her murals cost \$350 to \$400 a day, which usually includes materials, unless she has to hire a scaffolding person.

"The way I operate is if I figure this is going to take me X amount of time, this is how much it's going to cost you, and I stick by the quote. So, if it takes me longer, I'm not going to come back at you and say 'It's going to be more.'"

Because most of Primeau's work is what she calls "full blown," her murals take a minimum two weeks to complete.

Primeau says there are always ways of making murals for children that will allow them to modify or change them later, such as painting the mural on cloth or canvas. "When they get older, they can take it down, roll it up in a carpet tube and save it for grandkids or whatever."

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Vinegar fights washing machine odors

I recently spent a short time with *Observer & Eccentric* readers and with attendees of the fifth annual WWJ Family Fitness and Health Show at the Novi Expo Center.

A special thanks to all you folks who walked up and said hello and commented on this column. I'm happy you enjoy the information.

It truly is a privilege afforded me that I enjoy doing.

This kind of a get-together brings out the people who are most concerned about the environment around them. The most-often-asked question on this occasion had to do with odors around homes.

Mold is a big concern to everyone these days as health experts are teaching us much about the subject. Radon is another health factor that homeowners are more aware of; if you ever sell your home, you probably will have a clause about it in the selling agreement.

A question asked by more than the usual amount of people this year had to do with odor coming from their new front-load washing machines. Many commented that this new washer smells terrible compared to their old top-load washer.

I can only be honest with you and suppose an answer as to why. I will try to gain some insight from the manufacturers on this problem, but I promise nothing due to the fact that they seldom talk to me.

INADEQUATE ELBOWS
In a top-load washer you always had a few quarts of standing water when you were with the wash load, but you could never see it. The water was under the inner tub, and most of the water was in the drain tub and the pump.

There was usually a small elbow in the drain hose leading to the pump, and that elbow provided somewhat of a trap, much like the trap in the plumbing lines under the kitchen sink. We all know that the purpose of this type of elbow is to prevent odor from coming back into the open air of a room.

For one thing, I don't believe that the elbows in drain hoses of new front-load washers are adequate. Hold a bucket full of water straight up in the air and put a

hole in the bottom and you know that the water is going to pour out of it at a pretty quick rate. All the water will drain out of it.

Put a bucket in a horizontal position and do the same thing and put it just slightly off level. It could easily retain some water, and sitting water will cause odor problems.

VINEGAR BATH

I have always said that giving your washer a vinegar bath a few times a year can help prevent and remove odors. I think that if you own a new front loader, you should make it a habit to use the vinegar treatment every month.

Set the load level for extra large load and let the machine fill with the hottest water possible. (You might even want to turn up the hot water tank on the highest setting for a few hours before you start the treatment. Remember to reset it back to where it was when you are all done.) Don't put any clothes into the washer when you are doing this.

Four or five gallons of vinegar inside the drum, close the door and turn on the timer to agitate. Let it agitate for 10 minutes and shut it off. Don't let any of this vinegar drain off — shut off the timer before it gets to the end of the agitation cycle.

Leave the washer alone for 24 hours, then turn the timer back on and let it go through the remainder of the complete cycle.

I sincerely hope that this vinegar treatment takes care of odor problems because if it doesn't, I think the manufacturers are in for a big problem. Four years ago, a leading manufacturer had a big repair expense for fixing thousands of front-load washers that held too much water in the boot area of the front door.

The concept of the front-load washer isn't new — they have been out for 40 years — but the big push today has to do with energy conservation.

Contrary to the way I think, the U.S. Department of Energy has shown its might, and before too much longer, the only washer you will be able to buy will be a front loader.

If this odor problem really is because of design, you will see some holy stink raised right here. That odor is created by bacteria, and health-conscious consumers I have just met won't stand for it. Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can now be heard on WWJ-950 and WXYI-1270. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His telephone number is (248) 455-7828.

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